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General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
20th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 31 October 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued)

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13 December 1995
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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/25, A/50/171, A/50/182, E/1995/66 and Corr.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/366, A/50/371, A/50/400, A/50/407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518; A/C.2/50/2)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/74 and Add.1, A/50/218, A/50/453, A/50/515)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/50/227, E/1995/95, A/50/347, A/50/516)

1. Mr. KJELLEN (Sweden), speaking as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification, said that the progress reports on the work of the Committee were important because they provided an opportunity to set the Convention in the broader political framework of the General Assembly. The follow-up to the Rio Conference, of which the Convention was a key element, demonstrated the capacity of the United Nations system to address global problems of a new kind.

2. The support given to the Convention by the international community had been further confirmed during the past year: the Convention had been signed by 115 States, and many had begun the ratification process. It should enter into force in 1996, and the first session of the Conference of Parties would be held in 1997.

3. Thus, the Committee should conduct its work with the greatest possible efficiency. Its seventh session had been productive, especially on various technical issues. The eighth session would be devoted to scientific and technical cooperation and the question of a global mechanism; the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UNDP had expressed interest in housing the mechanism.

4. It had also been possible to take stock of the progress in urgent action for Africa and interim actions in other regions, the results of which had been rather encouraging. Specific actions had actually been taken using the principles and methods of the Convention, particularly in Africa. On the local level, they included creation of partnerships, the involvement of science and recognition of the close relationship between land and water management and the role of socio-economic factors.

5. The global character of the Convention and the special attention to be given to Africa were mutually supportive; Africa remained a cornerstone of the Convention.

6. While there was some cause for confidence, there were also concerns. In order to be fully effective the Convention needed to be widely disseminated, and the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations had

been unstinting in their efforts in that area. Voluntary funds were also a matter of concern, and he had had to launch an appeal to donor Governments. It was essential that those who would take responsibility for implementing the Convention in the field should have the opportunity to participate in meetings, particularly the next two Committee sessions.

7. The Convention was a modern instrument reflecting new concepts of the importance of development cooperation in a changing world, and an essential part of the post-Rio process.

8. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that, in the context of the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Benin had taken various initiatives at the national level. It had established such bodies as the Beninese Centre for Sustainable Development, created with assistance from the Netherlands, and the Benin Environmental Agency. It had formulated a programme for the implementation of Agenda 21, also with assistance from the Netherlands, instituted an annual campaign to raise environmental awareness, and launched a weekly television programme. On the international level, Benin supported the holding of a special session of the General Assembly before the 1997 regular session.

9. With regard to the fight against desertification and drought, Benin had begun the ratification process for the Convention. It had also established a technical committee on the implementation of the Convention and organized national information days and various demonstrations on the occasion of the World Day to Combat Desertification.

10. Combating desertification and the effects of drought was essential to the establishment of sustainable development, which should be the main objective of the United Nations for the next 50 years. It was of primary importance that measures should be taken to assist Africa without awaiting the entry into force of the Convention.

11. The decline in voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund and the Voluntary Fund continued to pose problems, despite the generosity of certain countries. The developing countries affected by drought and desertification, particularly the least developed countries and the African countries, should be assisted so that they could send two representatives to the sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which had two working groups. Furthermore, in terms of the size of its secretariat and of the voluntary contributions provided, the Convention should be on an equal footing with the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change.

12. In view of its widening responsibilities and the difficulty it was having providing funding for the representatives of the Sudano-Sahelian countries, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), should receive increased support.

13. Mr. Hayong MOON (Republic of Korea) noted that some progress had been made in the implementation of Agenda 21. The Commission on Sustainable Development had been effective in fulfilling its mandate and had proven its value as an intergovernmental forum for exchanging national experiences in promoting sustainable development. In that regard, the Republic of Korea had hosted two

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important workshops, one on changing consumption patterns and the other on access to and dissemination of environmentally sound technology.

14. However, much remained to be done. Issues of finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies were of particular concern.

15. The Republic of Korea supported the measures taken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to strengthen its activities, and also welcomed the initiative to decentralize the regional offices and to enhance its regional coordination role.

16. His Government intended to ratify the Convention to Combat Desertification, and expressed the hope that it would soon enter into force.

17. Mr. PAWAR (India) said that the partnership for sustainable development had been based on the premise that environmental protection could not be divorced from poverty eradication and efforts to promote economic growth in developing countries.

18. It had been agreed that the industrialized world would immediately take corrective and preventive action. Unfortunately, no significant steps had been taken by the developed countries to change their consumption and production patterns. In that regard, his delegation welcomed Norway's initiative to facilitate the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the area of consumption patterns. However, as far as the Commission itself and policies of the industrialized countries were concerned, there was hardly any progress. The developed countries were reluctant to fulfil their obligations in the area of emissions of ozone-depleting substances or to take action with respect to the impact of their industrialization on the climate.

19. The partnership for sustainable development had also been based on the premise that additional resources would be transferred to developing countries to meet their development requirements. However, official development assistance levels had declined continuously in 1993 and 1994, the tenth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) was incomplete and there were uncertainties regarding the eleventh replenishment of IDA. The resources of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) were also declining.

20. Similarly, the Global Environment Facility had failed to live up to expectations. Initially replenished at only $2 billion, it also suffered from its complex and time-consuming project approval procedures. The Global Environment Facility should emphasize action and adopt an efficient operational strategy because its credibility as a source of funding was at stake.

21. Another cause of concern was the lack of progress on the question of transfer of environmentally sound technologies which should be made available to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms. In that regard, it was unfortunate that the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Commission on Sustainable Development on Technology Transfer had been dissolved. More should also be done, in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to protect the rights of traditional holders of knowledge.

22. It was necessary to address those lacunae and to carry out an effective review of the situation in 1997. His delegation supported the convening of a special session of the General Assembly. Preparatory work on a document outlining a critical evaluation of the progress achieved and a programme of work for the next five years should be carried out by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

23. Although the international community as a whole was alive to environmental issues, the rich and poor countries did not always have the same concerns. In order to respond to the concerns of poor countries, the human dimension of environmental issues must be recognized.

24. Mr. STEER (World Bank) said that the imperative of implementing the decisions and recommendations of the Rio Conference remained as urgent as ever because the environment was deteriorating in many parts of the world. Nevertheless, there were some signs of hope: the need to ensure sustainable development was becoming a staple theme of policy-making and some 100 nations were now incorporating environmental concerns into their programmes and investments. Moreover, the current environmental policies of the industrialized countries were not as rigid as the traditional policies used to be. The new approach was pro-people and pro-development and focused on communities and families. The World Bank had recently completed a review of the new environmentalism whose hallmarks were seeking win-win options and promoting cost-effectiveness, easing administrative regulations, using market instruments, setting realistic standards, working with the private sector and building constituencies for change. Those new principles were already being replicated in countries around the world.

25. The World Bank was currently supporting Member States in implementing that new environmentalism. Sixty-five countries had already received financial support for the execution of targeted environmental programmes. Such programmes fell into three categories: programmes to strengthen national and local environmental protection institutions, programmes to prevent the pollution associated with urbanization and programmes to protect the rural environment (river basin management, soil conservation, forest protection). Other countries had also requested assistance. The World Bank's assistance packages included concessional and market-based loans, guarantees for private sector loans and analytical and advisory services.

26. Implementing the new environmentalism required effective partnerships among international organizations. It was encouraging to note that such partnerships already existed, particularly the three-way partnership of UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank for the management of the Global Environment Facility. In that connection, mention could also be made of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research and the new Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest, which was a $230 million grant programme to promote micro-enterprise credit programmes. Moreover, UNDP and the World Bank were merging efforts on water policy issues and were inviting other agencies to join them to form a global water partnership. The Bank had also recently signed an agreement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the Earth Council and other intergovernmental organizations. The Bank was also in active consultation with the secretariats

of the major conventions relating to the follow-up to the Rio Conference: the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Framework Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Convention on Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. It had offered to the parties to each of those conventions its wholehearted support as they sought to move into the implementation phase.

27. However, one key partnership, IDA, was currently under great threat. For more than 30 years, that partnership had been an effective instrument for providing assistance to the poorest countries in the areas of health, nutrition and education. The tenth replenishment of IDA, now entering its final year, might find itself without resources because of the recent decision by the United States Government to reduce its contribution. There was a danger that other donors might follow suit; the situation was therefore extremely serious and the international community's support was urgently required in that matter.

28. The implementation of Agenda 21 was a top priority for the World Bank. In the three years following the Rio Conference, it had granted assistance worth $67 billion to developing countries in that area.

29. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) said that during the three years that had elapsed since the euphoric adoption of Agenda 21, many Governments, particularly those of developing countries, had demonstrated their willingness to integrate environmental aspects into their development programmes. Similar encouraging efforts had also been undertaken at the regional and international levels including the formulation of conventions and other instruments to promote sustainable development and the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development which was assigned the function of monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21. The Commission's activities had had a profound effect on the work of the United Nations system.

30. Unfortunately, actual results had fallen far short of expectations. The developed countries had not fulfilled their commitment to ensure an adequate flow of financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology which were crucial for the developing countries to implement Agenda 21.

31. For that reason, his delegation looked forward to the special session of the General Assembly in 1997 which would be devoted to the overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21. The session should be used to help identify the main obstacles to the implementation of the Rio commitments at the local, national and international levels, and produce a commitment to eliminate them prematurely through the allocation of financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries. Particular attention should be given to the question of sustainable consumption and production patterns.

32. As for the institutional framework for follow-up, while the Commission on Sustainable Development had done a great deal to make the international community more aware of the importance of sustainable development, the priorities for its future activities should be set according to its mandate,

taking full account of the work of other United Nations bodies so as to improve coordination.

33. Greater participation by major social or sectoral groups in the work of the Commission might prove beneficial, particularly during the preparatory process for the special session. However, any arrangements that were made in that regard should not lead to a modification of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

34. While his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal that the Commission on Sustainable Development should undertake the preparatory work for the special session, it felt that the limited membership of that body could pose an obstacle to the equal participation of all Member States in the preparations. One possibility therefore would be to hold a preparatory meeting of the General Assembly, just before the special session, to review the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the preparations for the special session, with the report then to be submitted to the session itself.

35. Mr. WERTHEIN (Director of the UNESCO offices in New York and Washington) said that in the short and medium term, UNESCO would remain committed to following an interdisciplinary approach towards environmental matters, with a view to producing a synergy between the natural, social and human sciences, which would contribute to the preservation of the environment and the more harmonious coexistence of man with nature.

36. UNESCO would follow the same approach when choosing mechanisms for the implementation of Agenda 21, whether by participating in intergovernmental and international cooperation programmes on environmental and social scientific matters, such as the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and the Programme on Management of Social Transformations (MOST), or promoting socially and environmentally sustainable development through key activities such as education, training, research and information.

37. UNESCO had participated fully in the 1995 session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, contributing to the reports of the Secretary-General on chapters 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 34 of Agenda 21.

38. In the field of education, UNESCO had led a number of programmes in line with chapters 36 and 25 of Agenda 21, and it was seeking to promote the development of interdisciplinary sciences for sustainable development, and to improve communication between scientists and decision makers. As stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/50/422), UNESCO played a major role in global observation to assess the health of oceans, marine and coastal resources, and was working to involve developing countries in research and observation programmes on the hydrological cycle.

39. With regard to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNESCO was participating in research and in situ conservation activities, and in the work of the interim secretariat, in line with the Nairobi Final Act, and had organized the International Conference on Biosphere Reserves held in March 1995, which had led to the Seville Strategy.

40. In monitoring global environmental problems, UNESCO was participating fully in the United Nations system-wide Earthwatch Programme, under the direction of UNEP, and continued to promote education and information activities for various relevant groups, particularly decision makers and planners.

41. With regard to the Convention to Combat Desertification, UNESCO supported countries affected by desertification and was managing a number of programmes dealing with the scientific, technical and educational aspects of the Convention. In preparation for the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, UNESCO would stress the implementation of urgent measures for Africa, and would continue to cooperate with the Sudano-Sahelian countries, strengthening their scientific and technical capacities in order to continue the fight against desertification and drought.

42. Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria) said that desertification affected a sixth of the world's population and 70 per cent of the drylands, producing endemic poverty as its main result; that was further accentuated by the degradation of range lands and a decline in soil fertility.

43. The priority in combating desertification should therefore be the immediate adoption of measures to protect lands which were not yet degraded, particularly since there were a number of areas of the world where a majority of the population depended on agricultural activity for both sustenance and employment, and suffered terribly when harvests were poor as a result of soil infertility and insufficient rainfall.

44. One of the most significant accomplishments of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was to have brought the problem of drylands to the attention of the international community. Since the elaboration of the Convention to Combat Desertification, a number of mechanisms had been put in place to provide a framework for action at the regional and subregional levels in the most severely affected countries.

45. As the situation in Africa was particularly worrying, donor countries should support the work being done there to implement the resolution of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee concerning urgent action for Africa.

46. Each Government clearly had a duty to combat desertification. However, if the international community was truly determined to abide by the commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, specifically, in the context of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, it should take urgent steps to implement resolution 48/175 which called on donor countries to give financial support to the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) since, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in his report (A/50/347), multilateral financing had been on the decline since the adoption of Agenda 21.

47. In conclusion, Nigeria attached great importance to the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification and hoped that the necessary financial and technical resources would be allocated for that purpose, pending the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
21st meeting
held on
Wednesday, 1 November 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(A) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(B) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued)

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10 November 1995

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/25, A/50/171, A/50/182-E/1995/66 and Corr.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/366, A/50/371, A/50/400, A/50/407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518; A/C.2/50/2)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/74 and Add.1, A/50/218, A/50/453, A/50/515)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/50/227-E/1995/99, A/50/347, A/50/516)

1. Mr. KJELLEN (Sweden), speaking as Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Counties Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, welcomed the convergence of views among delegations. The timetable for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's work should be adhered to since that would enable the Committee to prepare adequately for the first session of the Conference of the Parties which he hoped would take place in 1997. He was optimistic that the Convention would come into force in 1996.

2. Mr. TALBOT (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the 13 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed disappointment and concern at the slow progress being made to fulfil the commitments undertaken under the Rio Declaration and in the implementation of Agenda 21. Many countries of Africa, Latin America and the Pacific region were vulnerable to a variety of environmental hazards both natural and resulting from human activity. In that context, the CARICOM member States looked forward to the early entry into force of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. CARICOM also supported the convening of a special session of the General Assembly, no later than 1997, on the overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21. The Commission on Sustainable Development was ideally placed to prepare for that review.

3. Preparations for that meeting would have to incorporate not only the results of the conferences on various aspects of sustainable development but also take into account the proposed agenda for development. The international framework established to monitor and promote all programmes for sustainable development also needed to be evaluated.

4. Priority issues could include the particular problem of small island developing States, the identification of constraints in progress and the means by which such constraints could be overcome and the search for a harmonized approach to sustainable development should be considered. The aim of the session should be to secure a strong political commitment to prompt and full implementation of Agenda 21.

5. The single most important impediment to progress in the environmental field had been the failure to provide for the transfer of appropriate technology and

new and additional financial resources to developing countries. While the replenishment and restructuring of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was most welcome, developed countries should honour the commitments they had made in Rio to increase their assistance flows to developing countries.

6. Concerning proposals for new and additional financing, the United Nations Development Programme had estimated that a 3 per cent reduction in military budgets during the current decade would provide roughly $1.5 trillion which could be used for sustainable development. Another proposal worthy of consideration was a tax on producers of pollution and speculative currency movements. Those measures, together with debt relief and equitable trading opportunities for developing countries could enable all States to fulfil the compact that Agenda 21 represented.

7. Mr. FOREMAN (Australia) said that the Commission on Sustainable Development should be endorsed as the appropriate forum to undertake preparatory work for the 1997 special session of the General Assembly. That preparatory work would enhance the Commission's political profile.

8. It was ironic that the Committee should be discussing environment and sustainable development at a time when some countries were giving little regard to the environmental impact of nuclear tests. Australia viewed the continuation of nuclear testing by China, and the resumption of nuclear testing by France as a backward step and as inconsistent with the provisions of Agenda 21. It deplored nuclear testing regardless of where it occurred.

9. As a biologically mega-diverse country, Australia had a strong interest in international activities concerning the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Jakarta, presented an opportunity to explore options for addressing those issues. That Conference should resolve outstanding procedural and administrative issues quickly so that it could effectively address its substantive work. The establishment of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests was an important step in the development of consensus for action for the proper management, conservation and sustainable development of forests. In that connection, his country would host a conference on certification and labelling of forest products in May 1996.

10. He supported international action on the management of chemicals, including persistent organic pollutants that took account of regional variations in environmental conditions and requirements. The goal of sustainable development would best be met by an approach that considered the interests of all members of the international community.

11. His delegation supported the development of an international legally binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals in international trade. The scope of such an instrument should not go beyond that of the current voluntary guidelines. Climate change was one of the most serious environmental problems facing the global community and his delegation was committed to working with other parties in seeking constructive and appropriate ways to strengthen the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

12. The successful implementation of Agenda 21 also required regional and national action. Australia had had its own national strategy for ecologically sustainable development since 1992 and was active in resource management issues at the regional level through the South Pacific Forum, the International Coral Reef Initiative and the implementation of the outcomes of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Concerning the latter, the review of the Programme of Action by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1996 and the General Assembly in 1997, would provide valuable indicators for the further activity necessary to assist small island States in their pursuit of sustainable development.

13. Australia was a founding member of the International Coral Reef Initiative whose aims included promoting education programmes, improved coastal management and coordinated research and monitoring at the global, regional and national levels to ensure that coral reef resources were managed in a sustainable fashion. The sustainable management of marine resources was particularly important for the Pacific region.

14. Mr. JABBARY (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the agreements reached at various international conferences on the environment had yet to be translated into action. Since emissions of pollutants into the environment, including toxic and hazardous wastes, originated primarily in the developed countries, and since the latter's unsustainable consumption and production patterns continued to be the major causes of the deterioration of the global environment, developed countries should take the main responsibility for protecting the environment.

15. They must, as a matter of urgency, start to implement the commitments that they had undertaken under Agenda 21, particularly by providing new and additional financial resources and transferring environmentally sound technologies on concessional and preferential terms to the developing countries.

16. The resources of the Global Environment Facility were far from adequate for the implementation of Agenda 21. His delegation endorsed the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21. That session should focus on the removal of barriers to the expeditious and comprehensive implementation of the Agenda.

17. The provision of substantial financial resources and other forms of support for countries affected by the problems of desertification, particularly in Africa, was essential to the implementation by all parties of their obligations under the Convention to Combat Desertification. Measures should be taken to mobilize and transfer financial and technological resources.

18. Concerning efforts to combat desertification and the effects of drought in Iran, a programme office for the regional network of research and training on desertification control had been established in Tehran. At its most recent annual session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had supported the strengthening of that office and had requested the convening, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, of a high-level meeting of the regional network to develop further its role and mandate.

19. Mr. MAKUETJE (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that they attached great importance to the early entry into force of the Convention to Combat Desertification. Furthermore, they had long recognized the indispensable role of women in sound approaches to natural resource management, and welcomed the inclusion of the section on women and the environment in the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

20. The SADC countries had reviewed and improved their agricultural, land use management, energy and water resource management and population policies with the aim of creating an environment conducive to sustainable use of natural resources, thereby honouring their international obligations. A study on drought and desertification had provided important information for the elaboration of subregional action programmes. The SADC countries highly appreciated the cooperation and assistance they had received from the Interim Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

21. It was estimated that over 6 million people in the southern Africa region would need emergency food assistance in 1995-1996 due to drought and the resulting land degradation. Despite government policy reform measures, lack of national capacity was causing implementation of those policies to proceed slowly. He urgently appealed to both bilateral and multilateral development partners to extend a helping hand in the form of financial and technological resources.

22. The States of southern Africa were encouraged to note that, since the expansion of its mandate to cover the entire African continent, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) had established a sub-office in Nairobi for eastern and southern African States. Its long experience in desertification and drought would be very useful to those countries' efforts to deal with the consequences of drought on the lives of the desert populations in the Kalahari and Namib deserts. A number of institutions in the region had been identified for strengthening and capacity-building.

23. The observance of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought provided a clear testimony to the effectiveness of national sensitization and awareness campaigns; those campaigns must be expanded.

24. Mr. BASMAJIEV (Bulgaria) said that while the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had represented a milestone in promoting international cooperation on sustainable development, much remained to be done. Bulgaria recognized that, together with efforts at the international level, the success of the process begun at Rio would depend largely on the practical implementation, at the national level, of the goals and commitments agreed upon. Bulgaria's efforts to create an overall strategy for sustainable development were aimed mainly at institutional strengthening and capacity-building. Insufficient financial resources and a number of external factors were limiting its economic and social development, however. Increased coordination at the regional level was also of crucial importance for achieving the goals of Agenda 21.

25. Bulgaria considered the Commission on Sustainable Development the most important instrument in the follow-up process of the Rio Conference and believed that it should continue to maintain a high political profile. Bulgaria also supported the reaffirmation in General Assembly resolution 48/174 of the central role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the principal body to coordinate and stimulate action in the field of the environment within the United Nations system. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) should also continue to play an important role. Efforts to implement the commitments of the multilateral environmental agreements should include the stimulation of international trade as an important factor for sustainable development.

26. With regard to the special session of the General Assembly scheduled for 1997, the identification of critical areas of sustainability must be based on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Rio commitments. The special session would help to maintain political momentum and give a clear sense of direction. The special session should result in a declaration which would set out future actions and priorities to promote sustainable development.

27. Mr. HONG Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that while much had been achieved in the field of environment and development since the adoption of Agenda 21, many of the commitments undertaken remained unfulfilled; States must now display the requisite political will to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development in a genuine global partnership. To that end, the developed countries should increase their official development assistance, provide new and additional financial resources and transfer environmentally sound technologies on concessional and preferential terms. They also should refrain from creating obstacles to the mobilization of financing for the benefit of the developing countries.

28. His delegation was satisfied with the enhanced role of UNEP in environmental matters within the United Nations system and looked forward to increasingly closer coordination between UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development. It attached considerable importance to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 and hoped that the valuable proposals contained in document A/50/453 with regard to the special session would be supplemented by proposals to be made at the current session and in the preparatory process for the special session. His Government, in keeping with its national strategy for the implementation of Agenda 21, pledged its close cooperation to that end.

29. Mr. ONGERI (Kenya) said that his country reaffirmed its support to the United Nations development agenda, which was geared towards alleviation of poverty and suffering in developing countries in a spirit of partnership. Appropriate resources and technology transfer were a prerequisite to the sound and equitable sharing of burdens in the development endeavour. Agenda 21 should be viewed as an international commitment to promote sustainable development. While the international community had stressed the interdependence and complementarity of environment and development, unless sufficient resources were mobilized to implement Agenda 21, sustainable development would be very difficult to achieve.

30. Kenya had ratified the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Convention to Combat Desertification was in the ratification process. A bill containing umbrella legislation in the field of the environment was ready to be submitted to its National Assembly.

31. UNEP was at the centre of the implementation of Agenda 21. The strengthening of its regional offices, however, should not result in the weakening of its headquarters at Nairobi. His delegation was concerned at the growing number of environmental meetings being held outside UNEP headquarters. The Government of Kenya had also expressed strong interest in hosting the permanent secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity at Nairobi.

32. Mr. AZAIEZ (Tunisia) said that, given the complexity of the commitments set out in Agenda 21, it was not surprising that it was taking a long time to achieve its goals. It was now necessary to build on the momentum of Rio, and all countries, in particular wealthy nations, should strive to ensure the full implementation of Agenda 21.

33. His own country's activities to achieve sustainable development were focused on combating desertification, protecting water resources and achieving a balance between energy consumption and environmental protection. His country accorded due attention to the socio-economic aspects of the problem of desertification and sought a better understanding of the mechanisms of erosion and desertification and of socially acceptable and economically viable techniques to combat them. Some progress had been made, but much remained to be done. The cooperation of the international community was crucial, and he urged a greater commitment to the Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. He also urged countries to increase their contributions to the Trust Fund and the Special Voluntary Fund relating to desertification.

34. His country's efforts to ensure an adequate supply of safe water were part of a long-term strategy to restore, safeguard, manage and develop natural resources in keeping with the ecological characteristics of each region. With a view to the rational use of energy resources and in the interests of seeking new and renewable sources of energy, his country was pursuing a policy designed to achieve substantial energy savings in the future and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It had established an environment and development observatory to secure detailed data on the various components of the environment.

35. The achievement of the goals established in Agenda 21 required the concerted efforts of all members of the international community, and he underscored the importance to the developing countries of adequate financing and the transfer of appropriate technology. The special session of the General Assembly to be convened in 1997 should, inter alia, seek improved ways to ensure such transfers. It should provide an opportunity for Governments to evaluate progress made and objectively analyse shortcomings.

36. Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the South Pacific Forum on behalf of the delegations of Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and his own country, said that Agenda 21 provided a

solid framework for establishing a balance between consumption, production and sustainable economic and social development. The United Nations should take pride in having facilitated the establishment of legal regimes, commitments, guidelines and action plans to protect global resources and combat environmental problems. Most of the countries on whose behalf he was speaking had taken steps to become parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

37. Forum countries had increased their active participation in recent international and regional forums, in which they had emphasized the importance of maintaining sound environmental management practices and sustainable development. The South Pacific Forum was a vital component of the international network following up the decisions reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and at follow-up forums, in particular in the Commission on Sustainable Development. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) provided a forum for regional cooperation on transboundary environment issues.

38. Although the delegations on whose behalf he was speaking welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation to strengthen and expand cooperation between UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), such institutionalization would be successful only if appropriate funding was provided in a timely manner. Regional efforts were under way to enable member countries to fulfil their national commitments under the Convention on Climate Change.

39. Member countries of the Forum had reaffirmed the need for a code of conduct on logging as a main feature of a comprehensive approach to sustainable forest conservation and management. They looked forward to contributing their experience to the Open-ended Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. It was unfortunate that at the Panel's recent meeting valuable energy had been wasted revisiting its agreed mandate and terms of reference. Its goal should be to devise constructive activities sensitive to national priorities and strategies, particularly those of the developing countries.

40. With regard to fisheries and marine resources, Forum countries had played an active role in, and had already embarked on follow-up work to, the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

41. As to linkages within the United Nations, he welcomed the ongoing progress in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and believed that the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development should be strengthened. The protection of the world's oceans was a major concern for the survival of such States, and he welcomed the European Union's support of the global programme of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities that was to be adopted shortly. Forum members had recently endorsed the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention).

42. The delegations on whose behalf he was speaking had reacted with extreme outrage to the resumption of nuclear testing by France in the region. Their call for an immediate halt to the testing, had been echoed around the world, and was reflected in a resolution currently before the First Committee of the General Assembly. By resuming nuclear tests France was ignoring its obligations with respect to the precautionary approach explicit in Agenda 21 and threatening the social and economic survival of the countries of the region. A proper scientific investigation must be undertaken to evaluate the environmental impact of French nuclear tests; the results of the study should be published free from political censorship.

43. The goodwill generated by the decision by France, the United States and the United Kingdom to sign the Protocols of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) would be greatly enhanced by a complementary decision to proceed to an immediate and indefinite halt to nuclear testing.

44. Mr. ELTINAY (Sudan) said that his delegation attached particular importance to the work of UNEP and had participated actively in the elaboration of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The Sudan believed there was an intimate link between the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment and the realization of sustainable development. The total amount of agricultural land in the Sudan shrank a little more each year, due to the results of desertification and drought. Since it had no alternative energy sources the Sudan had lost 10 per cent of its forests since it gained independence. Moreover, the influx of large numbers of refugees from conflict-torn or drought-afflicted neighbouring States had adversely affected the environment and depleted agricultural resources.

45. In response, the Sudanese Government had devised a comprehensive national strategy dealing with interrelated economic, social and environmental policies. A Ministry for the Environment had been created, along with a Higher Council for the Environment and Natural Resources, each charged with planning, policy elaboration, coordination and monitoring of environmental affairs. The Sudan was working to bring its national legislation into line with the commitments it had undertaken at the international level. Laws had been passed to protect Sudan's forests and a programme was being devised to involve all sectors of society in a reafforestation programme. Working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Sudan had implemented a programme to combat plant epidemics and had continued cooperation with research organizations to develop alternative sources of energy. A project to protect wildlife reserves had been devised but was awaiting funding from the Global Environmental Facility. Other work included the setting up of an early warning system for cases of drought and natural disasters, and ongoing cooperation with regional partners. Funding was still required for a public awareness programme on environmental issues.

46. While the Sudan had demonstrated its commitment to action, it had received little support from donor States for the implementation of its environmental programmes. It was hard to see how the environment could be protected when financing for such projects was refused. While the Sudan remained committed to the implementation of the Rio commitments, he stressed that more financing was needed if environmental and development goals were to be achieved.

47. Mr. MAINALI (Nepal) said that unless poverty was eradicated from the world, it would not be possible to achieve sustainable development. Investment in people and investment in environmental protection were equally important. Recognizing the vital importance of environmental protection, Nepal had established a high-level environmental protection council, which was responsible for coordinating cross-sectoral activities relating to the environment.

48. The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on the review and appraisal of Agenda 21 should provide an opportunity for promoting an integrated approach to environmental and developmental issues and further strengthen the consensus reached at the Rio Conference. An increase in official development assistance, improved market access for export products, more equitable terms of trade, encouragement of foreign investments and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies on a concessional and preferential basis would greatly facilitate the efforts of the developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, to implement Agenda 21. He underscored the urgent need for improved coordination between the United Nations and its development agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. Lastly, the agenda for development should establish a clear linkage between social, economic and political issues in matters pertaining to environmental protection and sustainable development.

49. Mr. KEBEDE (Ethiopia) said that his country was affected by recurrent drought and desert encroachment and therefore attached paramount importance to the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. It was disquieting to note that, despite the appeal contained in General Assembly resolution 48/175 for contributions to the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, contributions had, in fact, decreased. His delegation therefore appealed to its development partners to demonstrate their commitment by mobilizing additional resources for the multilateral funding of the efforts of developing countries to combat desertification and drought.

50. Given the important issues pending before the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, his delegation agreed that all Governments and concerned international organizations should make substantial contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund in order to ensure the full and effective participation of experts from developing countries. The replenishment of the Trust Fund was of critical importance to the success of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's future work and to the implementation of the Convention.

51. His country had developed a national disaster prevention and management policy and guidelines to mitigate the effects of drought. A national conservation strategy sought to harmonize development and environment programmes by focusing on such issues as soil degradation, deforestation, range land management, access to national resources, community participation and population and demographic issues, which had a direct bearing on efforts to combat desertification. The decentralization and democratization process in his country had created a favourable environment for popular participation in the preparation and implementation of such strategies. In conclusion, he

underscored the importance of international support for national and regional efforts to protect the environment.

52. Mr. RESHETNYAK (Ukraine) said that while some progress had been achieved since the Rio Conference in the implementation of Agenda 21, as evidenced by the elaboration and entry into force of a number of environmental conventions, destruction of the environment was occurring at a faster pace than human actions to combat it.

53. For developing countries and those with transition economies, implementing the concept of sustainable development required mobilization of additional resources which were often non-existent. Capital flows from developed countries and rational use of domestic resources were key, as was income from foreign economic activity, which could increase substantially with the lowering of protectionist barriers and trade liberalization. At the same time, however, each member of the international community bore the main responsibility for its own social and economic development, including its environmental aspects.

54. Ukraine had drawn up a draft State programme for the protection of the environment and the rational use of natural resources, which was awaiting approved by Parliament. It was also forming a national committee for sustainable development, which would deal with the aftermath of Chernobyl, among other tasks.

55. His delegation welcomed the results of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in particular the establishment of an Open-ended Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. That Commission was becoming a unique forum for discussion of environmental cooperation and a basic coordination mechanism for all United Nations bodies in implementing the concept of sustainable development. Its full potential could be reached if effective ways and means were found for increased interaction between the Commission, UNEP and other intergovernmental bodies.

56. Ukraine supported proposals for a 1997 special session of the General Assembly devoted to the implementation of Agenda 21. The preparatory process must involve non-governmental, scientific, business and political organizations. The mass media must also play a role in creating among the general public a sense of moral responsibility for finding solutions to global environmental problems.

57. Mr. SHIBATA (Japan) noted that much had been done to implement the contents of Agenda 21; agreements had been reached on climate change, fish stocks, forests and desertification and drought. However, more work still remained to be done to promote cooperation on sustainable development.

58. The special session of the General Assembly should lead to the renewal of the Rio commitments and give fresh political impetus to the sustainable development process. It would provide an opportunity to forge a global consensus on the need for a long-term strategy, and strengthen the Commission on Sustainable Development. It should produce a political declaration outlining guidelines for action and priorities to be undertaken by national and international bodies. The preparatory work should commence at the 1996 session

of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The special session, which should have the active participation of other major groups, should be scheduled for the end of the year so as to maximize its political impact.

59. UNEP should be strengthened and made both more efficient and effective. Japan welcomed the UNEP Governing Council's recent decision to review the Programme's governing structure and its ongoing support for the Commission on Sustainable Development.

60. Over 100 countries thus far had signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; action was now needed to implement its goals. To that end, Japan would continue to support the negotiation process.

61. Mr. TIENDREBEOGO (Burkina Faso) said that his country welcomed efforts to enhance international and regional cooperation on environmental issues including the establishment of a United Nations office in Nairobi. Given the contents of Agenda 21 and the increasing complexity of environmental problems, it was disturbing to see that UNEP was having to prove itself more effective and efficient while receiving decreasing financial resources. If the current trend continued, its work was likely to suffer and its goals would probably not be achieved.

62. While numerous commitments had been undertaken at the Rio Conference, they had not all been translated into action, due to a general failure to demonstrate true partnership; that could only be remedied through the exercise of political will. Burkina Faso hoped that the planned special session of the General Assembly on Agenda 21 would prove to be a turning-point in the implementation of the Rio commitments.

63. Burkina Faso welcomed the support of international agencies and organizations in the fight against desertification and believed that training and public awareness were among the best means of combating the phenomenon. In addition to a public awareness campaign, projects had been devised to promote the greening of the entire national territory, involving plant production, the planting of trees and protection of existing natural vegetation. Reafforestation and forest protection programmes were being implemented and use of gas as the primary source of energy had been set as a national priority.

64. Those were but a few examples of actions taken at the national level to protect the environment and combat desertification and drought, but international support was still needed. The international community should increase its contributions to the budget of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and offer effective support to the fight against desertification and drought.

65. Mr. AGONA (Uganda) said that the Rio Conference had been a landmark in international cooperation for development, recognizing the link between poverty eradication, production and consumption patterns, and the sustainable use of resources. Thus far the financial resources provided for the implementation of Agenda 21 had proved totally inadequate. Certain parties seemed to have adopted a selective approach to the Rio commitments, either because the threats posed to the global environment had been exaggerated or because a decision had been taken

to ignore the dangers, leaving them for future generations. Perhaps some considered that the problems were specific only to the third world, but that view was shortsighted. The positive attitude expressed by Japan was a welcome exception to the general trend.

66. The developing countries continued to call for concrete action to support their efforts in the areas of resource flows, trade, debt servicing and technology. In that regard, the special session of the General Assembly should be used as an opportunity to renew commitment to a global effort to protect the environment.

67. Drought and desertification were tremendous problems that threatened the survival of entire communities; they must be dealt with in an integrated manner. Although the United Nations organizations concerned had done much, international response to efforts to combat desertification and drought had thus far been lukewarm. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee should complete its work in as timely a manner as possible, and adopt a clear funding strategy; the interim secretariat should be fully supported and urgent action should be undertaken to assist the most affected areas in Africa.

68. Mr. RYSTO (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the allegations of two delegations that the nuclear testing, currently being conducted by France, would adversely affect human and environmental health, were not supported by the findings of the research undertaken by high-level scientific groups at Mururoa Atoll, including a report presented to the Brisbane forum in Australia. A report by the European Commission had concluded that there was no danger of exposure to radiation as a result of the tests and stated that the level of radiation was set at 0.002 of the required level for safety.

69. Mr. FOREMAN (Australia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation totally disagreed with the points made by France and supported the statements made by the delegation of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the South Pacific Forum. Nuclear testing did, indeed, pose a serious threat to human health and the environment; if that were not the case why had France decided to undertake nuclear testing tens of thousands of kilometres away from metropolitan France? The French statements were, at best, an expression of hope; at worst, they ignored the risk of a serious accident in the South Pacific. France should acknowledge the call by countries in the South Pacific and elsewhere to put an end to nuclear testing.

70. Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that if nuclear testing was safe, France would surely have conducted the tests either in the Bay of Biscay or Paris. France had failed to address the question of who would be directly affected if there were a nuclear accident, and who would have to clear up afterwards. No answers had been provided as to why the second nuclear test had been moved from Mururoa Atoll, nor was it clear which enemy France had in mind when developing nuclear weapons in a post-cold-war world. France had been suspended as a dialogue partner with the South Pacific Forum until it put a stop to nuclear tests in the region. France must comply with international law and could not run away from long-term environmental problems.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
22nd meeting
held on
Thursday, 2 November 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MURPHY (Ireland)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Murphy (Ireland) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/25, A/50/171, A/50/182-E/1996/66 and Corr.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/366, A/50/371, A/50/400, A/50/407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518, A/C.2/50/2)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/94 and Add.1, A/50/218, A/50/453, A/50/515)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/50/227-E/1995/99, A/50/347, A/50/516)

1. Mr. ACHA (Peru) reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the principal body within the United Nations system responsible for coordinating and stimulating activities in the area of the environment. Only with serious participation on the part of Member States could UNEP play a key supporting role. The developed countries should therefore maintain their commitments to contribute to and finance environmental activities and in particular to support UNEP.

2. Peru's wide diversity of climates, tremendous reserves of fauna, flora, microbiological and genetic resources that were critical to the future of the world food and pharmaceutical industries, were at the service of the international community. However, the terms of their availability were governed by the relevant provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In that regard, there was a need for new and additional resources as well as for greater transfers of technology in the context of broad international cooperation. Greater and better access to biotechnology within the framework of Agenda 21 would benefit the indigenous peoples and communities as well as farmers.

3. The struggle against desertification and drought had been given a very high priority by his Government for desertification was a serious problem in the high plains, shared by Bolivia and Peru. He therefore called for an early ratification and implementation of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and or Desertification, particularly in Africa. For a number of reasons, including the very limited availability of arable land, a considerable number of farmers in Peru were turning to the more lucrative cultivation of coca leaves causing further degradation of the soil. He appealed to the donor community to ensure a flow of substantial financial resources in order to deal with that drought and desertification. It would also be helpful to have more efficient forms of international cooperation such as debt for nature swaps, debt cancellation or trust funds or the provision of resources for programmes of action at the national, subregional or regional levels.

4. Mr. FRASER (Canada) said that the United Nations had shown its capacity to achieve results, but much more had to be done to fulfil the commitments made at

Rio. For its part, Canada had focused in particular on the issues of fisheries and forests. The successful negotiations of the Convention on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in New York had been a particularly significant achievement; all Member States should sign the Convention and ratify it as quickly as possible. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests had developed a detailed programme of work aimed at providing the Commission on Sustainable Development with recommendations for action on key forest issues. Canada would provide 130,000 Canadian dollars to support the work and aims of the Panel and assist developing countries in participating at the meetings. With regard to UNEP, the streamlining of programme priorities would ensure that work was focused on environmental issues in an integrated and holistic way. It was important that the Bretton Woods institutions should make sustainable development a central goal of their policies and programmes as recommended by the Group of Seven at their meeting in Halifax.

5. Action on climate change, oceans and urban environmental issues should be at the top of the international agenda. Climate change was a major environmental problem that called for concerted and sustained action at the local, national and international levels. Protection of the oceans was also very important. The Canadian fishing industry had been severely affected by the depletion of fish stocks as a result of land-based sources of marine pollution, overexploitation of marine species, and the destruction of the coastal habitat. Action must be taken to reverse that phenomenon. Canada therefore supported the work on a global programme of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities.

6. Canada had also undertaken a number of institutional measures to "green" its policies and operations and was in the process of creating a Commission of Environment and Sustainable Development; each federal department was required to prepare a sustainable development strategy over the next two years.

7. At a recent meeting of the international experts on persistent organic pollutants, held in Vancouver, it had been agreed that immediate action was needed at every level to deal with the problem of organic pollutants. Canada expected to participate actively in negotiations on a convention concerning the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals.

8. Canada had undertaken a commitment to stabilize green gas emissions at the 1990 level by the year 2000 and to explore the options for further reductions to the year 2005. Its national action programme on climate change formed the model for future action in that area.

9. Canada had devised its own biodiversity strategy with the involvement of various governmental bodies and business, environmental and aboriginal groups. At the global level, it had been active in promoting the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and would be sponsoring a biodiversity technology fair at the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Indonesia, providing financial support for the participation of developing countries and assisting some of them in the development of national biodiversity strategies. Canada would be co-sponsoring a regional planning workshop on the economics of biodiversity for Latin American and Caribbean

countries, and had offered to host the permanent secretariat of the Biodiversity Convention in Montreal.

10. In view of the importance it attached to the sustainable development of small island States, Canada had contributed over 90 million Canadian dollars to assist with improvements in air transport, air safety and maintenance of civil aircraft in the Caribbean region. It had also contributed some 18 million dollars for a public awareness campaign and national action programmes to deal with desertification and drought in the Sahel region. In addition, it had set up a Desertification Convention Office to respond to desertification problems. Although those were significant achievements, considerable work remained to be done.

11. Pending the special session of the General Assembly on the review of Agenda 21, it was important that the international community should identify those issues that were critical to achieving sustainability for the next decade and develop the international mechanisms that would ensure substantial progress on those issues. The coordinating role of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be strengthened and all major groups should be encouraged to participate actively in the discussion of environmental processes.

12. Mr. BALZAN (Malta) said that the issue of environmental degradation, particularly of the marine environment, was of special significance to Malta. Although each small island State faced different specific problems, concerted action on the international, regional and national levels was imperative. For example, the pressures exerted on the Mediterranean environment, both an important maritime highway and a tourist destination, were of concern to the Government of Malta, which believed that further mechanisms were needed in support of that region's sustainable development. The establishment of a Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development would have a positive impact on social and economic growth in the region. Climate change was another critical issue, and Malta urged countries to honour fully their commitments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change. For its part, Malta had stepped up action to eliminate the use of ozone-depleting gases by the turn of the century. His delegation shared the concern that shrinkage in the budget of UNEP could undermine the implementation of Agenda 21. Environmental concerns should not become secondary to social and economic issues.

13. The concept of international security was evolving from a purely military definition to one also encompassing economic, environmental and social aspects. Any operational and structural reform within the United Nations system must be propelled by a vision for the future and backed by adequate financial resources. In that context, Malta suggested that the Trusteeship Council might perhaps be entrusted with the additional role of acting as guardian of the common ecological heritage of humanity and holding it in trust for future generations.

14. Mr. ZAW WYNN (Myanmar) said that as a result of the transition to a market-oriented economic policy and the rapid pace of industrialization, environmental considerations had assumed a major role in his Government's decision-making. The National Commission on Environmental Affairs played a fundamental role in the development of sound environmental policies and the setting of environmental standards. The Government had taken measures to deal

with environmental degradation. In the border areas, where development had lagged behind other parts of the country, an integrated programme for development had been launched to wean the inhabitants from dependence on poppy cultivation and to eliminate poverty. The programme was also expected to replace agricultural techniques that harmed the environment.

15. The Government had also initiated action to combat land degradation through afforestation and reforestation in nine districts. At the same time, it was devoting significant resources to developing and strengthening integrated development programmes for the eradication of poverty and promotion of alternative livelihood systems in areas prone to land degradation.

16. While Myanmar was less severely affected by desertification and drought than some of its neighbours, it believed that concerted regional and global action was required in order to attenuate the consequences of that scourge world wide.

17. His delegation hoped that the 1997 special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 would be successful in identifying the critical constraints to the implementation of the commitments agreed on in Rio.

18. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) said that problems pertaining to the preservation of a sound environment were clear and striking examples of the increasing interdependence which characterized today's world. Since the developing countries had embarked on far-reaching structural reforms and were facing such problems as a crushing debt burden and declining terms of trade, the international community should provide substantial additional resources for the implementation of Agenda 21 and take steps to transfer ecologically sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms.

19. Achievement of sustainable development should not be used as a pretext for hampering the development efforts of the countries of the South. Cooperation and partnership between countries of the North and South was the best way to cope with the environmental problems facing the international community. As the most vulnerable and poorest region of the planet, Africa should be given priority in the mobilization of resources.

20. Turning to the issue of desertification and drought, he said that Africa was the continent most severely affected by that problem. Over the previous 50 years, nearly 65 million hectares of once green land on the southern fringes of the Sahara had been swallowed up by the desert. That, coupled with soil degradation, deforestation and locust attacks had worsened the continent's already critical economic situation. The international community should accordingly commit itself to emergency action for Africa. Such action should form part of a global, integrated and multidisciplinary approach which took into account, on a priority basis, the interaction between environmental strategies and various development programmes in Africa.

21. Pending the entry into force of the Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification, it was important that the international consensus in favour of emergency assistance to Africa should produce its full effect as quickly as possible in order to support African countries in coping with the challenges of

desertification pursuant to article 7 of the Convention. Efforts made to that end by countries of the Arab Maghreb Union and countries of the Saharo-Sahelian subregion deserved further support by the Interim Secretariat of the Convention. The establishment of a Global Mechanism pursuant to article 21 of the Convention would, in that regard, be a crucial first step towards gathering adequate resources to combat desertification. In his delegation's view, that Global Mechanism should function under the authority of the Conference of the Parties.

22. Algeria welcomed the steps taken by the Interim Secretariat to heighten public awareness especially through the observance of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. His delegation attached considerable importance to the continued role played by the Interim Secretariat within the framework of the preparatory activities organized by the affected countries.

23. Ms. WEILL-HALLE (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) said that the real test of the Convention to Combat Desertification, was the impact it would have on people in the drylands. In that regard, the Fund would play a twofold role in the implementation of the Convention. First, it would continue to pursue innovative programmes that assisted the poor in fragile ecosystems, including dryland areas, to unleash their productive capacity through conservation-based strategies. It expected to provide $150 million to 200 million annually out of its regular resources for marginal areas. Second, it would continue to mobilize additional resources for poverty alleviation initiatives in dryland and other areas of high poverty incidence. Through its Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification, IFAD had been able to provide additional resources directly to African countries.

24. Lack of awareness was the single most important obstacle to effective implementation of the Convention. The Fund had worked closely with the Interim Secretariat preparing a simplified version of the Convention and was also exploring the possibility of audio-visual versions of the Convention intended for the population in dryland areas. The Fund was also concerned at ensuring that funds got down to the community level. In that regard, it had agreed to host, along with the Interim Secretariat and others, a forum on participatory local area development programmes.

25. The Global Mechanism must go beyond a clearing-house function in order to actively solicit and facilitate the participation of financing institutions and the private sector in implementing the Convention. The Global Mechanism should be a catalyser, innovator and promoter of financial opportunities for sustainable dryland development. The Fund felt that it had the potential capacity to host a successful Global Mechanism. In that context, the Rome-based food and agriculture agencies of the United Nations agreed that sustainable agriculture, food security and poverty alleviation were prerequisites for the successful implementation of the Convention. Finally, IFAD, in collaboration with others, was organizing a conference on hunger and poverty in Brussels on 20 and 21 November.

26. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that although the Rio Conference had recognized the global nature of environmental problems and the need for the international community to address them on the basis of a comprehensive strategy,

incorporating social, economic, environmental and development issues, the advanced industrial nations continued to increase production at the expense of the global environment and of the developing world. The international community should remember that sustainable development was not attainable without social justice.

27. The 1997 review of Agenda 21 was of particular importance in the light of the results of recent global conferences and it was important that preparation should include institutional matters, as well as objectives for future work at the national, regional and international levels. The concept of sustainable development was multifaceted and economic, social and environmental facts should be considered in a systematic manner.

28. Although much had been achieved since the Rio Conference in terms of environmental legislation and organizational matters, there had been little progress in terms of implementation. Essentially that was due to a lack of financial resources and failure to transfer environmentally sound technology to the developing world. The special session of the General Assembly should devise urgent measures to create the institutional mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to follow through on the Rio commitments.

29. He hoped that the special session would produce a final declaration that would not only assess the successes but also outline priorities for the future to overcome the obstacles which had appeared over the past five years and call for strengthened cooperation between advanced countries and the developing world, with a view to creating the kind of sustainable development envisaged at the various global conferences.

30. Preparation was vital to its success; Egypt therefore supported the proposal contained in document A/50/453, paragraph 40, for the holding of regional reviews early in 1996, to provide input into the overall review. The first step would be for Member States to undertake national reviews; that would be followed by regional meetings whose results would be considered by the high-level segment of the Sustainable Development Commission in 1997. The Commission should present its recommendations to the special session and a draft final statement could be prepared. The nineteenth session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) could also be used to prepare for the special session.

31. The International Convention to Combat Desertification was an ambitious instrument. Egypt was proud to be among the first six States to sign it and hoped that more countries would follow suit so that it could come into force in the first half of 1996 and a conference of Parties to the Convention could be held in 1997. More funding should be made available for the preparation of that conference.

32. Egypt had experienced problems with irrigation, drinking water shortages and soil erosion in the north of the country. International cooperation and support were needed to help Egypt increase its water resources and gain access to technology to improve the quality of drinking water in rural and desert regions. Meanwhile, Egypt had undertaken a number of programmes analysing water consumption patterns and the management of water resources.

33. Regional cooperation in Africa and the Mediterranean area was an important element in the preservation of water resources, with the creation of an early warning system to identify the risk of drought or water shortages in those regions.

34. With regard to biological diversity, developing countries continued to require assistance with capacity-building. States should implement the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity and transfer the necessary technology to developing countries. Again, capacity-building in developing countries could not be undertaken without the provision of financial resources, so that training in environmental and natural resources management could be undertaken. At the technical level, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity should devise technical guidelines for a protocol on biological safety to be prepared at the Cairo meeting in December.

35. UNEP played a vital coordinating role in international cooperation on environmental matters and should receive more support and financial resources so that Agenda 21 could be fully implemented. The Governing Council's decision to support the goals and aims of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (18/39 C) was a welcome move and support should be afforded to the appropriate sections of the Arab League.

36. For its part, Egypt had taken a number of environmental measures, passing special laws, setting up its own Ministry of the Environment and supporting the Global Environment Facility, while participating actively in regional and international cooperation forums. It looked forward to the revitalization of the sustainable development process.

37. Mr. KOREISSI (Mali) said that over 900 million people throughout the world were threatened by desertification and drought. The adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in June 1994 was an important step forward. He paid tribute to those States which had contributed to the special voluntary fund which had made it possible for representatives of many countries directly affected to participate in the sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

38. It was encouraging to see that, although the Convention had not yet entered into force, the signatories were all actively implementing emergency measures for Africa. At the subregional level, Mali had joined its efforts with eight other countries which were members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). Mali's national plan to combat desertification, in place since 1985, focused on combating ecosystem degradation, management and development of energy potential and hydraulic systems. For Mali, where 80 to 90 per cent of environmental problems were related to desertification, implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification was a matter of the highest priority.

39. Ms. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that for some time, the Niger's environmental policy had focused on combating desertification, thus neglecting other aspects of the question. The Niger had observed World Day to Combat Desertification through a major information and public awareness programme on the Convention to

Combat Desertification. Recently, however, it had begun to adopt a more multidisciplinary, global approach.

40. Earlier that year, a national workshop had been held to launch the process of drafting a national environmental plan for sustainable development. A national forum on the subject was planned for January 1996 and the plan itself would be drafted between February and August.

41. The Niger had made a firm commitment to implement the activities envisaged in the Convention. However, that would require financial resources. Her delegation was concerned at the low level of voluntary contributions received thus far for the implementation of the emergency measures for Africa, and hoped that the international community would respond to the appeals for increased resources.

42. Mr. CHANDIO (Pakistan) said that, despite the progress that had been achieved, there were increasing grounds for pessimism regarding the full implementation of the decisions and recommendations adopted in Rio. Foremost among the issues of concern was the question of financing. Thus far, the only mechanism to fund environmental projects was the Global Environment Facility, but, with a total funding of only $2 billion, it could not be expected to make any significant contribution towards the implementation of the Rio commitments, especially since the financial requirements for the implementation of Agenda 21 had been estimated at $125 billion per year. The transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries was another area of concern. It was particularly unfortunate that one of the major recommendations of Agenda 21, the establishment of environmentally sound technology banks, appeared to have fallen by the wayside.

43. The Rio process seemed to be responsive primarily to the concerns of developed countries. Specific measures had yet to be taken to address the prime cause of environmental degradation, namely, unsustainable and wasteful patterns of consumption and production. In addition, the proliferation of inter-sessional sectoral meetings had outstripped the ability of developing countries to follow the environmental discourse. That had serious consequences, since the outcome of such meetings often became the basis of decisions taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Undoubtedly, there should be attempts to address pressing sectoral issues, but not at the expense of addressing the structural causes of environmental degradation. Unless such structural issues were addressed, the special session of the General Assembly in 1997 was likely to yield disappointing results.

44. Mr. AASS (Norway), referring to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly, said that it should be a separate session in June 1997, so as to increase the visibility of the event. Priorities should be considered on the basis of an assessment of areas where sufficient progress had been achieved or where new or revitalized efforts to meet the goals set in Rio were needed. A comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the overall assessment of progress achieved would be a good starting-point. He shared the view of the representative of Pakistan that the issue of sustainable consumption and production patterns could serve as an umbrella concept integrating the environmental and economic factors.

45. With regard to the outcome of the session, it should highlight areas where further improvements were required. It should also be used as an opportunity for the international community to agree on how to intensify efforts to enhance the implementation of Agenda 21. He agreed with the Secretary-General that the level of representation at the special session should be such as to maintain the high political momentum begun in Rio. The special session should also take advantage of broad participation by major groups which had proven to be enriching to the Commission on Sustainable Development. A good outcome required good preparation, and the Commission would have a central role to play. The two remaining sessions before June 1997 should be used to prepare for the special session.

46. Mr. GUTIERREZ (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries, recalled that the Presidents of the countries in his region had, in October 1994, adopted a strategy known as the Alliance for the sustainable development of Central America, which covered the political, moral, economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of development.

47. The Alliance was guided by two principles: economic growth based on equity and achieved without harming natural resources, thus giving the most vulnerable groups in Central America real opportunities for progress; and the indivisible character of the natural heritage. Measures to bring about sustainable development had already been adopted. As a complement to existing instruments of regional integration, the Central American Council for Sustainable Development had been set up for promotion and negotiation with other countries and organizations.

48. The concept behind the Alliance was to bring about progressive change in the quality of life through economic growth with social equity and the transformation of the methods of production, at the same time maintaining the ecological balance. It respected the ethnic and cultural diversity of the area and called for full participation by all. It also sought to promote peace and democracy.

49. As a first link with countries outside the region, the Central American countries had recently embarked on cooperation with the United States on sustainable development and the joint implementation of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of pollution, education and training programmes, energy diversification and conservation, the protection of ecosystems and the interchange of information.

50. The Commission on Sustainable Development should examine the proposals on specific methods on such important topics as the indicators of sustainable development, the participation of society in general in the process of development, the standards required for environmental products and new mechanisms for financing development.

51. Ms. WILLIAMS-MANIGAULT (United States of America) praised the report contained in document A/50/453. Her country favoured a special session for the overall review of Agenda 21, conducted with minimal expense. It was important that the special session should be forward-looking. Its main focus should be the integrated implementation of the results of recent major United Nations

conferences. In that context it should address the future mission and actions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Her country believed that that would be best accomplished by having the Commission oversee the integrated plan for implementing the outcome of the various conferences. The special session should also address the policy-making role of the Economic and Social Council.

52. As for the outcome of the session, it would be preferable to have a factual report or assessment, in the form of a Chairman's summary, rather than a negotiated political declaration. Decisions on the level of representation were a matter for each country. However, the level of representation at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, during discussion of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, could provide a useful example.

53. Her country was generally satisfied with the tenor and outcomes of the eighteenth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was heartened by the reaffirmation by the Group of 77 and China of the central role of UNEP as the principal body for catalysing and coordinating action on environment within the United Nations system. UNEP still, however, faced serious challenges. The United States had urged it to give top priority to getting Governments together to address global environmental concerns and to continue emphasizing its role in monitoring, assessing and analysing global environmental trends. UNEP continued to perform many functions usefully. Of particular interest was its activity in developing binding Prior Informed Consent procedures for toxic chemicals, the databank programme for Awareness and Preparedness for Accidents at the Local Level and its Regional Seas Programme.

54. The United States was also pleased with the outcome of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was heartened that the Commission had undertaken work in areas where there had been gaps, especially in respect of work on international forest issues. The Commission could improve by continuing its focus on promoting the concept of sustainable development, addressing special or new and emerging issues and promoting coordination on sustainable development. That involved bringing together national sustainable development bodies, promoting the voluntary national reporting process, encouraging countries to develop plans or strategies and agreeing on a list of key indicators to measure progress towards the goals of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

55. The United States fully supported the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and urged all concerned countries to support the Convention's goals.

56. Mr. HAMDAM (Lebanon) said that throughout the 16 years of war his country had managed to participate in meetings and conferences dealing with the environment, and when it had re-emerged from years of strife it had established the Ministry of Environment. Environmental considerations had been incorporated in the National Agenda on rehabilitation and reconstruction. A governmental committee had also been established comprising representatives from various ministries with a view to coordinating the construction and rehabilitation efforts on an environmentally sound basis. The Ministry of Environment also

held monthly consultative meetings with representatives of the private sector to exchange views and information on ways to protect the environment. Projects to stop agricultural degradation and deforestation, to clean the seashores and to introduce new technologies to factories in order to make them environmental-friendly were in hand.

57. Mr. YOOGALINGAM (Malaysia) said that the effects of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development were mixed; implementation of programmes under Agenda 21 still suffered from the constraints of resources and political will. Moreover, the burden of change continued to be placed disproportionately on the developing countries. Appropriate mechanisms to study the implementation of Agenda 21 should be put in place so that relevant decisions could be taken in 1997.

58. Resources for development activities were contracting all round. Overseas development assistance had declined for the fourth consecutive year and stood at 0.29 per cent of gross national product. If existing commitments were not honoured, moreover, recipient countries would suffer adverse consequences

59. One bright spot in an otherwise disappointing scene was the progress achieved in the Global Environment Facility which was currently operational. However, the US$ 2 billion made available was not adequate to meet all the obligations under the relevant Conventions and should therefore be seen merely as an initial contribution. An innovative financial mechanism should be given serious consideration. Priority attention should be given to various proposed global taxation schemes, including modest levies on global air travel, a tax on global speculative flows of capital, a tax on the exploitation of mankind's common assets on the seabed and a tax on trade in weapons of war.

60. The transition towards sustainable development should not be exploited as an opportunity for external sources to dictate the development policies and strategies of developing countries. Nor should environmental concerns be used as a way of promoting protectionist policies. Flagrant disregard for global environmental concern had also been demonstrated by the current nuclear tests in the South Pacific and elsewhere. All nuclear testing should cease immediately. There was no guarantee that there would be no serious environmental or health implications. An independent international commission of eminent scientists, particularly from neighbouring countries, should be dispatched immediately to undertake an impartial verification of the impact on the environment.

61. With regard to the UNEP report, his delegation noted that while the scope of its responsibilities continued to expand, contributions to UNEP continued to decrease. The relationship between the Commission on Sustainable Development and UNEP should be considered and rationalized; duplication should be avoided by ensuring that the Commission remained the overarching policy body. The problem of the decline and unpredictability of contributions to the UNEP Environment Fund needed to be resolved for UNEP could not function effectively if resource availability remained uncertain. Lastly, he announced that on 6 October 1995 Malaysia had signed and ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and had made a modest contribution of US$ 10,000 to support its implementation.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
23rd meeting
held on
Friday, 3 November 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued):

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

AGENDA ITEM 94: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued):

(c) EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT

OTHER MATTERS

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7 December 1995
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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/25, A/50/171, A/50/182-E/1995/66 and Corr.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/366, A/50/371, A/50/400, A/50/407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518, A/C.2/50/2)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (A/50/3, A/50/74 and Add.1, A/50/218, A/50/453 and A/50/515)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (A/50/227-E/1995/99, A/50/347 and A/50/516)

General discussion (conclusion)

1. Mr. CANCHOLA (Mexico) said, with reference to preparations for the special session of the General Assembly planned for 1997 to examine Agenda 21, that the session should focus on how work relating to environment and development was allocated among the various United Nations bodies and how activities and other matters were coordinated.

2. The special session should result in the adoption of a fundamental policy statement. The discussions should refrain from calling into question the outcomes of negotiations or commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and should guard against attempts to transfer the burden of implementing such commitments. There would be no point in holding a special session if it was to be merely a matter of reaffirming previously adopted provisions. The aim in view was clear: to identify the obstacles preventing the full implementation of Agenda 21 and to find means of overcoming them. Preparations for the session did not need to be exhaustive and could well be carried out as part of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council, or of the General Assembly itself.

3. Mr. LORENCIO (Brazil) said that, while document A/50/453 was a good point of departure for discussions on the special session of the General Assembly to consider Agenda 21 in 1997, States should continue to formulate proposals to enrich the debate. Their thinking ought to be based on the principles stated in the Rio Declaration. In that regard Brazil noted that the commitments undertaken, particularly those concerned with the transfer of technology and financial resources, were not always respected. International cooperation should be strengthened in order to achieve a real partnership.

4. With regard to the special session of the General Assembly, it might be still too soon to plot its progress and decide its agenda, but it had already been recognized that the question of consumption and production methods should be considered and that priority should be given to the implementation of the major United Nations conventions on climate change, biological diversity and desertification.

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of the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, called on States that had not yet ratified the Convention to expedite their internal procedures of ratification, acceptance or approval, and invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention to report, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on the results of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties. She expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 94: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued)

(c) EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT

Draft resolution on enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries (A/C.2/50/L.7)

11. Mr. CABALTULAN (Philippines), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.7 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that its general aim was to strengthen the activities of the international community in order to achieve a comprehensive, effective, equitable and durable regulation of the debt problem of developing countries. It had already introduced innovative measures to that end, which, far from causing economic upheavals, had actually tended to prosperity.

OTHER MATTERS

12. Mr. CABALTULAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noted that the General Assembly should authorize the commitment of travel expenses for the representatives of developing countries that were not members of the Commission on Sustainable Development who wished to take part in the meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. He therefore requested the Chairman to send a letter to that effect to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee.

13. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take the action suggested.

14. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
24th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 7 November 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

(b) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

AGENDA ITEM 94: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) FINANCING OF DEVELOPMENT (continued)

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15 December 1995
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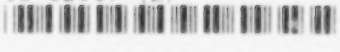

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF YITZHAK RABIN, PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

2. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said, in response to comments relating to the organization of the special session of the General Assembly in 1997, that, in the scope of its preparations, the scale of participation by non-governmental organizations, the role played by the entire United Nations system and the range and significance of the instruments adopted, the Rio Conference had been particularly path-breaking. The 1997 review would also be a first, since the Rio Conference was the first of the recent conferences to reach its five-year review and thus, when determining the modalities for that review, it must be borne in mind that similar reviews would also be organized for the subsequent conferences.

3. It had been planned to devote the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in 1997, to preparations for the special session. A number of representatives had expressed the wish, however, that preparations should begin immediately after the end of the fourth session. In view of the amount of work involved, the Secretariat was in favour of that idea and had already begun preparations for the special session, including through the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

4. While follow-up to the Rio Conference was primarily the Commission's responsibility, other agencies had also incorporated Agenda 21 in their activities. It was therefore essential to determine how the inputs of those other bodies and arrangements, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the conferences of the parties to the various conventions opened for signature at Rio, would be incorporated in the Agenda 21 review and appraisal process.

5. In addition, since the Rio Conference, several conferences had been held on issues closely linked to Agenda 21. The Committee should therefore consider how the 1997 review should be incorporated into the broader context of coordinated follow-up to those conferences, in the Economic and Social Council and in the General Assembly.

6. Non-governmental organizations had a vital contribution to make to the Agenda 21 review process. It was therefore essential to consider ways of facilitating their participation in preparations for the special session and in the session itself. In addition, it was also important to enlist the involvement in the entire Agenda 21 review and appraisal process of the

mechanisms set up by Governments, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, in the form of national programmes, and also the local authorities involved in the implementation of Agenda 21.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

(b) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/50/39, A/50/340 and Add.1 and A/50/421)

7. Mr. BENN (Director, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, United Nations Development Programme), introducing the documents submitted for consideration by the Committee under agenda item 97 (b), said that the far-reaching changes on the international scene - the globalization of trade and the liberalization of the economy - created an opportunity to galvanize both technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) and economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC). To that end, the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/164, had decided that at the current session it would consider the possible need for further reports on the matter. The Group of 77, for its part, planned to request the convening of a United Nations conference on South-South cooperation.

8. The Secretary-General's report on the state of South-South cooperation (A/50/340 and Add.1) showed that TCDC, which was relevant to all sectors, should form an integral part of overall development strategies. In addition, TCDC made possible the effective participation of all developing countries in the new international trading system. Finally, with its regional and subregional dimension, it was no longer merely a development option but a real necessity for economic, political, social and cultural development and for long-term peace, security and solidarity. TCDC had always been one of the priorities of the United Nations system, which worked closely in that area with Governments and relevant intergovernmental organizations. While developing countries had the primary responsibility for promoting South-South cooperation, the United Nations agencies should support the planned activities, playing a catalytic role and developing new concepts for the expansion of such cooperation. Through their financial and technical support, the developed countries were also contributing significantly to the implementation of TCDC activities.

9. In its report on its ninth session (A/50/39), the High-level Committee on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries reviewed progress in the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and endorsed the main recommendations contained in the report on new directions for TCDC (TCDC/9/3), which, inter alia, called for a more strategic focus for TCDC, closer integration between TCDC and ECDC, the identification of "pivotal" countries and the expansion of the TCDC information referral system (TCDC-INRES) into a multidimensional database.

10. Mr. CABACTULIAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that TCDC was a powerful instrument which helped ensure the equitable integration, in a spirit of solidarity, of the developing countries in the world economy. It was important to recognize that the world could no longer be viewed exclusively through a North-South prism. Because of their similar

geographical, environmental, economic and social conditions, the developing countries had increasingly valuable development experience to share. At the same time, South-South cooperation was intended not to replace, but to complement North-South cooperation.

11. While primary responsibility for linking TCDC and ECDC rested with the developing countries, it was important for the international community to commit itself to supporting those modalities and to providing adequate resources for the implementation of the activities concerned. It should be recognized that any promotion of development in the South would also benefit the North: the more developed the South, the stronger its capacity to buy goods and services and to attract foreign capital. The Group of 77 and China therefore welcomed the proposal by the Japanese Government to set up a TCDC support fund to be administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and hoped that other donors would support it. They also hoped that the Perez Guerrero Trust Fund would receive more contributions, enabling it to pursue implementation of the Caracas Programme of Action.

12. The Secretary-General's report on the state of South-South cooperation (A/50/340 and Add.1) and the report of the High-level Committee on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries on the work of its ninth session (A/50/39) laid the basis for broadening South-South cooperation along the general lines laid out in document TCDC/9/3. Action should be taken on two fronts: first, to raise awareness among both Governments and international organizations through information and training campaigns that they would have to adapt to new conditions; and secondly to take specific and innovative action in such fields as trade and investment, debt, poverty eradication and macroeconomic coordination and management.

13. At its eighteenth ministerial meeting the Group of 77 had called on the General Assembly to convene a United Nations conference on South-South cooperation. That appeal had been reiterated at its nineteenth meeting and, quite recently, at the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cartagena. The developing countries believed that such a conference was a key means to reinvigorate the support of the international community and to chart courses of action for cooperation that could only be beneficial to every country in the world. The member countries of the Group of 77 therefore intended to submit a resolution on the matter at the appropriate time.

14. Mr. RØNNEBERG (Marshall Islands) associated himself with the views expressed by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and recalled that his country was involved, with its neighbours in the South Pacific, in TCDC activities to try to implement parts of the Barbados Programme of Action. The leaders of the South Pacific Forum had noted the measures adopted to benefit TCDC, but expressed concern that raising capital for equipment purchases would be a crucial problem, since the initial funding was beyond the capabilities of the national resources of the countries of the region. With help from sponsors the countries of the region, which were strongly committed to TCDC, could then ensure that there would be greater access to markets for the agricultural and fisheries products of the region and could become less dependent on developed countries for essential products.

15. His country intended to participate in the expansion of South-South cooperation in the region and had read the reports produced by the South Centre with great interest. It also welcomed the activities of the United Nations Volunteer programme, from which it had benefited tremendously and which was a good example of how the United Nations could facilitate the use of developing country experts in other developing countries. It therefore hoped that the programme would be expanded.

16. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) expressed his satisfaction with the Secretary-General's report on the state of South-South cooperation (A/50/340 and Add.1) and supported his view that developing countries themselves were the prime movers behind ECDC/TCDC and that the United Nations system should be supportive, while developing new conceptual approaches when necessary. At the same time, the activities of many United Nations agencies for such purposes were financed by the developed countries and that aspect of the question should therefore not be overlooked.

17. Japan attached more importance than ever to South-South cooperation and funded activities for that purpose undertaken by such agencies as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNDP and various Asian bodies. It had provided substantial support for the recent meeting of experts and welcomed the conclusions reached by them, namely that South-South cooperation was a viable mode of cooperation and that regional and interregional cooperation constituted essential components of it. The levels of development of some developing countries suggested possibilities for more innovative forms of ECDC/TCDC, such as triangular forms of cooperation, a modality in which Japan had already participated. Inadequate funds on the part of developing countries and a lack of cooperation on the part of traditional donors, however, prevented the expansion of South-South cooperation. To invigorate it Japan was considering expanding the Japan-UNDP Human Resources Development Fund. It would also be helpful if a facility for promoting South-South cooperation were established within UNDP, such as an open trust fund supported by interested parties.

18. Lastly, his delegation believed that the creative implementation of projects and activities was a far more effective means of promoting South-South cooperation than holding a United Nations conference on the subject.

19. Mr. SHRESTHA (Nepal) said that cooperation and dialogue were more than ever necessary in a world where liberalization and globalization of economic and social problems had increased and social and economic stability could not be achieved by any country's ignoring the problems of its more disadvantaged neighbours.

20. South-South cooperation was an integral element of international cooperation for development and an essential basis for economic growth. It was not, however, a substitute for North-South cooperation, but complementary to it, and it was therefore in the interests of developed countries to provide technical and financial support, since their economies were closely intertwined with those of developing countries.

21. The ever-increasing economic disparities among the developing countries themselves were a matter of concern, the worst hit being the least developed, land-locked countries. In that context the recommendations of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s should be implemented. Nepal, for example, with a rate of economic growth no higher than 3 to 4 per cent and with poor natural resources and a small industrial base, had to develop its human resources through education and technical training.

22. The report on new directions for TCDC should also be implemented, particularly with regard to the adoption of a more strategic focus in relation to trade and investment, debt, poverty alleviation, production and employment, macroeconomic policy coordination and aid management. Governments of developing countries should be encouraged to adopt a national TCDC policy, to strengthen national focal points and to promote triangular technical cooperation arrangements, particularly through the participation of the private sector.

23. Also with regard to trade, developing countries could strengthen their economic cooperation by implementing more effectively programmes such as the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries and the Action Programme for Economic Cooperation of the Non-Aligned Movement. Following the establishment of the World Trade Organization on the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the least developed countries risked marginalization in the process of liberalization of the world economy. To prevent that happening the international community should implement as soon as possible the decisions of the Marrakesh Ministerial Meeting. International forums could also play a role in creating an atmosphere conducive to the growth of trade among developing countries. Nepal had ratified the Preferential Trading Arrangement of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

24. His delegation considered that the idea of convening an international conference on South-South cooperation deserved to receive increasing consensus. It welcomed the new opportunities offered by the eleventh Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement. It also appreciated the efforts made by the Administrator of UNDP to increase the allocation of resources to TCDC in the next programming cycle.

25. Mr. YAO Wenlong (China) said that at a time when national economies were increasingly interdependent as a result of economic integration and the liberalization of international trade and investment, economic and technical cooperation were more important than ever for the developing countries.

26. Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), a new type of international multilateral technical cooperation initiated by a large number of developing countries in the 1970s to mobilize their national resources for their mutual development, encouraged self-reliance, could only help to promote the establishment of a new international economic order and should therefore be strengthened. Experience also suggested that technical cooperation among developing countries should be closely linked with economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC), with a view to facilitating the integration of the developing countries into the new world economic environment.

27. South-South cooperation, which was one of the primary objectives of the United Nations, was an important component of international development cooperation and was a catalyst for international economic growth and development. However, owing to insufficient resources, the scale of such cooperation had never reached the expected level. Although it was primarily up to the developing countries to fill those resource and technological gaps, the developed countries had an instrumental role to play. Reference should be made in that regard to the "trilateral" arrangements which some developing countries had begun to establish to finance South-South cooperation activities within the framework of their bilateral assistance projects. Although it could not replace North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation could greatly benefit the international community by strengthening the role of the developing countries in international economic activities, and his Government was prepared to join with other developing countries, with the support of the developed countries and United Nations organizations, in exploring innovative forms of cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual interest.

28. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand) said that his delegation was pleased to note that South-South cooperation had been incorporated as a priority theme in the work programme of the United Nations system, as was indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation (A/50/340 and Add.1).

29. His country had been an active participant in TCDC and ECDC for many years and was no longer solely a recipient, since it also provided developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region with varied types of assistance in a number of sectors: human resources development, equipment, transfers of technology, agriculture, health, education, trade and investment. Within the framework of the partnerships it had forged with its neighbours in Asia and the Pacific, his Government had opted for the modality of trilateral arrangements whereby a third country or agency supplied funding support for projects and, since such arrangements had proved cost-effective and successful, it appealed for increased participation by donor countries and international agencies.

30. With regard to ECDC, his Government had helped to establish various subregional economic cooperation zones to promote the growth of the developing countries concerned, in particular land-locked countries, by invigorating their export sector and attracting investment. With regard to financing, his Government had established an international economic development fund through which it provided soft loans to its neighbours, as well as a disaster emergency fund.

31. Moreover, South-South cooperation should not be confined to the public sector: the private sector, which was already providing such cooperation, should be encouraged to participate even further. Lastly, the objective of South-South cooperation was to help the developing countries help themselves. Accordingly, partnerships among Member States, in particular the donor countries, international organizations and the private sector, should be further strengthened and they should follow the example of Japan, whose contribution to cooperation efforts was most commendable.

32. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and said

that at a time of expanding globalization, deepening interdependence among countries and increasing regional integration, South-South cooperation was a key component of international cooperation for development. That explained why the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, at its session in May and June 1995, had adopted a new strategic approach focusing on a number of high-priority areas such as trade, investment and poverty alleviation and requiring closer links between TCDC and ECDC, the expansion of the information system for technical cooperation among developing countries and the strengthening of relevant institutions.

33. Various strategic initiatives augured well for the future, in particular the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and the Asia-Africa Forum (Bandung) which should stimulate the more effective implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. However, two requirements must be met in order to achieve that goal: adequate financing and effective institutions. There was no doubt that the new TCDC approach could be implemented only if adequate financial resources were made available. A special trust fund should be established to strengthen TCDC and ECDC. Furthermore, it was essential to strengthen the institutional capacities of the relevant United Nations bodies; in particular, the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries should be given the autonomy it required in order more fully to implement the new directions and various programmes of action. At the country level, national and regional centres for the promotion of TCDC should be consolidated. To that end, his Government had established a South-South technical cooperation centre within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement.

34. The importance of South-South cooperation had been highlighted by the convening of the Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on South-South Cooperation among Developing Countries in May 1995 and by the many agreements, conventions and joint policies on South-South cooperation. Technical cooperation among developing countries offered substantial opportunities for exchanges among the developing countries, whose rates of growth were very diverse. However, that vast potential was far from having been fulfilled.

35. In order to move the TCDC process forward, it would be necessary to intensify regional cooperation and economic integration. The developing countries bore the primary responsibility for their own development and for expanding technical cooperation, and the South Centre played a pivotal role in that regard, as did exchanges between regional integration secretariats. Assistance from third parties such as the Special Unit of UNDP and the Division for Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries of UNCTAD should be strengthened, as should the triangular or trilateral modalities for cooperation established by a number of developed countries.

AGENDA ITEM 94: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) FINANCING OF DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/50/L.6)

36. Mr. CABACTULAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.6, entitled "Global financial

integration: challenges and opportunities", on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The draft resolution had been prepared as a companion resolution to the draft resolution on enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries (A/C.2/50/L.7) and addressed private financial flows, in particular portfolio investments, which could wipe out the economic progress painstakingly achieved by the developing countries.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

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General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/11 and Add.1, A/50/254-E/1995/501, A/50/345, A/50/425-E/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518)

(b) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/50/39, A/50/421, A/50/340 and Add.1)

1. Mr. MPHATHI (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 48/173 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community, the SADC region had experienced a number of positive developments notably, the move towards multi-party democracy with the invaluable assistance of the international community and the expansion of the Community with the admission of South Africa and Mauritius.

2. At the same time, the region was facing daunting new challenges. Indeed, as a result of the expansion of the Community, there was a pressing need to reconstruct infrastructure throughout the region while addressing urgent social problems and putting the region's economies on a sustainable growth path. Noting that the Community had demonstrated prudence in the management of financial and other resources, he appealed to the international community to continue to assist SADC in its endeavours by providing new and additional resources.

3. The SADC countries had, in addition to many areas of common interest (such as the energy, agricultural and natural resources and environment sectors), established a mechanism to deal with defence, security and conflict resolution in the region. The Community was presently engaged in discussions with other regional organizations in the context of South-South cooperation. In that regard, he welcomed the establishment of the African-Latin American Institute with headquarters in Namibia and Uruguay.

4. Mr. PAWAR (India) said that economic and technical cooperation among developing countries was a valuable mechanism for promoting growth and accelerated development particularly at a time when protectionist pressures were intensifying in the developed countries. Such cooperation strengthened the collective self-reliance of developing countries and facilitated the reorientation and growth of the world economy. The countries involved in South-South cooperation should focus on modest practical projects in the fields of trade, investment and transfer of technology and should avoid waste and duplication and reduce costs through harmonization.

5. The involvement of the private sector should be more actively encouraged. Given the inadequacy of information about the situation and economic prospects in other developing countries, access to relevant information databases should be fostered. South-South cooperation should be expanded by increa ing product and country coverage, and regional cooperation and integration arrangements should be promoted in order to enhance competitiveness and facilitate benefits from economies of scale. The Preferential Trade Arrangement of the South Asian

Association for Regional Cooperation was an example of such cooperation. Measures should also be taken to encourage private investment flows among developing countries. Regional centres of excellence should be established and networking among them promoted in order to build human resources. The developed countries should assist by providing financial support through triangular economic and technical assistance programmes. The capacity of the United Nations system to contribute further to the expansion of South-South cooperation should be strengthened.

6. Despite constraints on its resources, his country actively cooperated with other developing countries, for example, by providing training, educational, consultancy and technical and economic services and through innovative cooperation programmes. In conclusion, he said that only by ensuring a better quality of life for all peoples could peace and security be assured. Accordingly, increased bilateral and multilateral resources should be allocated to support economic and technical cooperation among developing countries.

7. Mr. Ha Young MOON (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation attached great importance to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. The potential for South-South cooperation had increased signifi-antly during the 1990s with increasing globalization and interdependence among nations and new opportunities had been created by the expanding world market economy.

8. His country considered human resources development a prerequisite for the economic and social development of developing countries and it hosted training programmes for participants from many developing countries. Commensurate with its capacity, his country was committed to assisting other countries; it would increase its official development assistance and hoped to provide technical training to over 80,000 people by the year 2010.

9. Increased participation of the private sector and selected non-governmental organizations in the planning and implementation of South-South cooperation would facilitate the integration of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, thereby maximizing the impact of South-South cooperation projects. Many private sector companies in his country provided facilities for the implementation of Government-sponsored training courses for such cooperation.

10. Efforts to promote South-South cooperation should be intensified, in particular through the United Nations Development Programmes Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other appropriate channels. In conclusion, the developed countries, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), regional development banks and other multilateral financial institutions should increase their contributions within the framework of triangular funding arrangements in order significantly to accelerate South-South cooperation activities.

11. Mr. BELHIMEUR (Algeria) after reviewing the history of the involvement of the United Nations in promoting South-South cooperation, underscored the importance of General Assembly resolution 49/96, and said that at its current

session the General Assembly should endorse the recommendations of the recent UNDP/UNCTAD jointly supported Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on South-South Cooperation. Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries should be viewed not as an alternative but rather, as complementary to North-South cooperation.

12. Regional and subregional cooperation - one example of which had been the establishment of the African Economic Community in 1991 - had made a significant contribution to South-South cooperation. Although it was true that such cooperation had been helpful in combating poverty and that the economies of some developing countries had prospered, the fact remained that official development assistance was declining; there was a tendency to expect the developing countries to adopt the same economic reforms as their developed partners, without regard to their respective capacities to adjust to the ups and downs of an increasingly complex world economy. To succeed, South-South cooperation required the assistance of the wealthy countries, which had as much to gain from the undertaking. The process of economic integration among the developing countries must be strengthened. The UNCTAD Standing Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries and the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of UNDP had identified a wide range of areas for enhanced cooperation to achieve that goal. It was also necessary to restructure international economic relations by enabling the developing countries to participate more fully in multilateral decision-making bodies, improving export prices for their commodities and increasing investment flows to those countries. Donor nations should increase their involvement through triangular funding arrangements.

13. Various components of the United Nations system had made a significant contribution to South-South cooperation. The Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries should receive greater logistical and material support in order to enable it more effectively to promote such cooperation. Member States should give due consideration to the establishment of a special fund for South-South cooperation. His delegation also favoured the convening of a United Nations conference on the topic.

14. Mr. ANSAY (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)) said that his organization was well equipped for fostering technical cooperation among developing countries. Its members were all developing countries; the mandates of its legislative bodies called for the promotion of economic, social and cultural cooperation among Member States; and its subsidiary organs, agencies, affiliated institutions and international universities were geared towards the sharing of capacities and strengthening of cooperation in different spheres of socio-economic activity.

15. Referring to the report of the High-level Committee on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries on the work of its ninth session (A/50/39), he said that the international community's support strategy must always be tailored to the specific needs of Member States as identified by them, even when in certain instances such needs might fall in other areas of development, such as public service reform or the peaceful use of atomic energy. In that connection, OIC stood ready to collaborate with the United Nations in providing such expertise, consultancies and research and training opportunities.

/...

to institutions of member States as its specialized institutions might be able to mobilize. He looked forward to a revival of his organization's relationship with the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. He would support proposals that might advance that process, resource and other constraints notwithstanding.

16. Other areas that had the potential for cooperation between OIC and the United Nations organizations in the promotion of ECDC/TCDC, would be collaboration in establishing an equivalent of the UNDP Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) Programme in OIC member countries and promoting the trade information network of the Chambers of Commerce and Industries of the Group of 77 countries and reinforcing and expanding the TCDC Information Referral System's network.

17. Mr. LAING (Belize) said that increasing globalization called for the intensification of economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). Only thus could developing countries cope with the rapid changes in technology and products. The proliferation of often converging and overlapping subregional and regional cooperation arrangements was merely a reflection of the dynamism which drove globalization. In that regard, there was a need to expand the scope of formal cooperation by encouraging ECDC and TCDC between regions.

18. Noting that developing countries generally had little or no impact on multilateral trade, he called for a serious study of the position of small countries. To that end, assistance was urgently required to improve trade financing mechanisms, develop service sectors, develop laws on international trade and develop regional mechanisms for trade adjudication.

19. The issue of trade financing could be addressed in part if the newly industrialized and newly industrializing countries could be persuaded to tolerate a greater degree of risk, not only in the area of trade but also in that of investments.

20. In order to usher in a climate that was propitious to South-South cooperation, ECDC/TCDC should be enhanced by extending it to new areas such as women in the economy - as opposed to women in development - by reorienting transportation, especially air and maritime transportation, in a South-South direction and improving South-South telecommunications capabilities in order to reverse the anti-democratic trends in the ownership of that vital medium. ECDC/TCDC institutions must also support vast increases in educational, scientific and technological development in the South. In that connection he called for the strengthening of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries as well as for the strengthening of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 8 November 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF YITZHAK RABIN, PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

1. Mr. COHEN (Israel) thanked the Chairman and all the members of the Committee on behalf of his country for their expressions of sympathy following the assassination of Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, and said that the Government of Israel was determined to continue to work towards a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/50/113 and Add.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/345, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518)

(a) TRIENNIAL POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (A/50/202-E/1995/76, A/50/202/Add.1-E/1995/76/Add.1, A/50/202/Add.2-E/1995/76/Add.2, A/50/202/Add.3-E/1995/76/Add.3)

2. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) introduced the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/50/202 and Add.1 and 2) submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 55 of General Assembly resolution 47/199.

3. Since one of the central aims of the report was to supply a sound technical and substantive basis for the triennial review, special attention had been paid to collecting a broad spectrum of views on the current state of operational activities of United Nations bodies by various means: by sending questionnaires to developing countries, developed countries, United Nations organizations, resident coordinators and their senior colleagues, at the country level, and by sending missions to 14 recipient countries. In addition, extensive consultations within the United Nations system had been conducted, particularly within the context of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The preliminary review at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council had provided important insights which had guided the finalization of the report in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/50, and had been updated with further responses received from developing countries, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA.

4. The report, which defined the areas in which immediate action was required by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, contained 28 recommendations and supporting analyses covering all aspects of resolution 47/199, in addition to information regarding improved regional coordination and operational collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions. All the recommendations responded to specific needs: they voiced concerns expressed at the country and local levels, and decisions in those areas would foster a more systematic approach to substantive collaboration among the principal partners involved.

5. The current state of multilateral development cooperation was paradoxical. At a time when United Nations system activities were increasing in volume and scope, available resources, including official development assistance (ODA),

continued to diminish. If that trend continued, the United Nations system would lose its effectiveness on the ground and it would be that much more difficult to carry out the tasks of reform and coordination.

6. The recommendations therefore focused on the triad underpinning operational activities: governance funding and operational efficiency. While impressive progress had been made with regard to governance and efficiency, funding posed serious problems. It was therefore to be hoped that the negotiations on an improved funding system would be reinvigorated in accordance with paragraph 32 of General Assembly resolution 48/162, and that the next three years would witness the emergence of a reliable system of funding and programming that met the requirements of developing countries.

7. Operational activities were an important way of supporting national activities to implement global conferences. In that context, it was imperative to maintain country specificity. Cooperation activities undertaken by the United Nations system were based on the precept that all programmes and projects, regardless of how they were funded, retained a national character. Multilateral development cooperation must therefore serve the purposes of the national leadership, encourage the strengthening of national capacity and respect the prerogative of countries to set their own priorities. That did not apply only to funds and programmes of the United Nations: the specialized agencies and financial institutions, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions, could also be included at the request of programme countries.

8. The United Nations was passing through a critical period. The crisis of confidence in it and the lack of resources had led to considerable rethinking on the new direction to be given to its work and the new momentum given to its mandates, particularly on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. There was a growing emphasis on strengthening its development activities and on streamlining its presence at the country level. Operational activities being the "visible face" of the United Nations in many countries, they contributed significantly to its image. A triennial review therefore provided an important opportunity to improve the functioning of the United Nations and enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

9. Mr. SPETH (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme) said that the triennial review of operational activities for development was taking place at a time when the United Nations development system was undergoing momentous change. The mandate of UNDP had been fundamentally transformed in order to build a more focused, effective and accountable organization. Over the next three-year programming cycle, which would coincide with the next triennial review, UNDP would contribute to implementing the 28 recommendations presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/202), which were all important steps towards a more vital United Nations.

10. UNDP had streamlined its structure in 1994, had a new Executive Board, and had introduced the process of setting success indicators as part of the reporting procedure. Its mandate had been transformed, and now consisted of helping to develop national capacity to achieve sustainable human development, priority being given to the fight against poverty and its corollaries, the advancement of women, environmental protection and the creation of sustainable

livelihoods. Given its focus on poverty eradication, UNDP was committed to implementing the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, promoting an integrated approach to poverty eradication within the United Nations system and helping countries to develop their own strategies and programmes in that field.

11. As part of its efforts to improve the quality of its programme, UNDP had changed its programming process, making it incentive-based, and would allocate its resources among countries with a view to improving programme quality and results.

12. With regard to support to the United Nations system in general and a system of resident coordinators in particular, UNDP was operating at both headquarters and country level. At headquarters level, the Administrator had been given the responsibility of improving coordination and harmonization of policies in the sphere of economic and social work, which had allowed him the privilege of assisting the Secretary-General in preparing his recommendations on an Agenda for Development, the United Nations system special initiative for Africa and follow-up measures to recent United Nations conferences, and in defining new responsibilities for the regional economic commissions. At the country level, UNDP had given priority to supporting the resident coordinator system and had taken several measures to that end: it had extended the selection pool of resident coordinators/resident representatives and had put in place special training programmes; a larger percentage of resources had been allocated to the work of resident coordinators and the assignment procedure for resident coordinators/resident representatives had been made more rigorous, in order to meet the individual needs of countries. UNDP had created a special support office at headquarters, and had established mid-career training programmes for resident coordinators and representatives in order to foster greater cohesion. Lastly, a common country situation analysis methodology was being developed by the Subgroup on Harmonization of Programming Procedures of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP).

13. Enhanced coordination required the strengthening of links with the Bretton Woods institutions. UNDP had therefore revitalized its joint task force with the World Bank in order to enhance substantive and operational collaboration at global and country levels in areas such as capacity-building, aid coordination, co-financing and complex emergencies. Furthermore, a working group on the strengthening of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions had been constituted under the chairmanship of the Associate Administrator of UNDP, with the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, UNCTAD, UNICEF and UNFPA as members. Lastly, to ensure enhanced links between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system, the complementary nature of the three instruments in force - the letter of intent, the policy framework paper and the country strategy note - should be improved in order to achieve people-centred sustainable development.

14. Since over 40 per cent of the ODA managed by United Nations bodies was allocated to emergency relief operations, UNDP had reoriented its efforts in order to support bodies which helped refugees, internally displaced persons and other victims of crises. A special UNDP funding facility had been created to supply countries in crisis with the resources necessary for their reconstruction

or rehabilitation, and through round tables the Programme had mobilized supplementary resources for countries such as Angola and Rwanda. Strengthening the UNDP emergency response division had been made a top priority in order to assist the resident coordinator system in a wide variety of pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis situations. To that end, procedures had been made more flexible, rosters of specially qualified personnel had been established and UNDP had significantly expanded its country-level work in peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction. UNDP also supported the Department of Humanitarian Affairs by working to ensure that the resident coordinator had the training and experience necessary to coordinate humanitarian operations in complex situations and emergencies.

15. Lastly, the path that operational activities should take over the next three years was currently being mapped out, and the complex interrelationships which existed between operational activities for development and emergency operations should accordingly be taken into consideration so that the various components of the system could continue to make a case for donors to fund the efforts of the countries involved.

16. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund) said that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was applying General Assembly resolution 47/199 in its policy planning, programming and training exercises. The Fund had strengthened the role of resident coordinators, particularly in the context of the implementation at country level of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In order to implement that Programme, UNFPA field offices had been asked to work closely with all United Nations bodies. Since many of the Conference goals were very similar to those of other recent international conferences, such cooperation guaranteed a more coherent implementation of the goals of other conferences. UNFPA also thought it important to link its mechanism for making use of the programme approach to population and development issues with the country strategy notes. It had actively participated in all the inter-agency mechanisms seeking greater harmonization in the areas of national execution, decentralization, monitoring and evaluation and also staff training.

17. With regard to issues of concern to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, of which she was the current Chairman, she said that the Committee had adopted procedures for assisting Governments in the preparation of country strategy notes, and, on behalf of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, it had adopted an updated statement on the role and functioning of the resident coordinator system. It had also contributed to the preparations for the triennial policy review of operational activities and to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 by organizing various training initiatives, including field coordination workshops for United Nations country teams, follow-up workshops for national officials and training courses for trainers as part of capacity strengthening.

18. In order to have real progress, resident coordinators must be given the means to exercise their authority and, as far as possible, harmonize the procedures to be followed by countries. The programming process should include common stages such as situational analysis, consideration of future strategies and project approval. At that stage, programmes should be submitted for a

common review before approval. UNFPA had already instituted that procedure in countries where the Fund's programme had been fully decentralized.

19. Improvement of operational activities would also require a reform of the current financing system. In fact, ODA constituted only 0.29 per cent of the GNP, whereas countries had made a commitment to reach a level of 0.7 per cent of the GNP. Only a few countries, namely Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, had fulfilled their obligations in that respect. A system of financing that was predictable, continuous and assured must be established.

20. It was also necessary to reform the Economic and Social Council. Subsidiary bodies should contribute to a common Economic and Social Council agenda in collaboration with all governing bodies of the funds and programmes, which would require long-term planning. Those bodies could then align their work programmes with that of the Council and contribute to a substantive consideration of a selected number of issues.

21. Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) said that UNICEF had been an active participant in the inter-agency deliberations leading to the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial policy review of operational activities and it endorsed its conclusions and recommendations. UNICEF and its JCGB partners had agreed upon a new, more transparent process for the selection of resident coordinators that would widen the pool of professionals eligible for such posts. UNICEF had also been involved in the redrafting of guidelines for the resident coordinator system and in the development of guidelines for the country strategy notes. UNICEF country programmes were currently being developed within the context of strategy notes, which would facilitate inter-agency collaboration. UNDP and UNICEF intended to increase the number of their common premises, and 45 country-based offices had been identified for possible consolidation. It had also been decided to harmonize the programming cycles of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, and a memorandum had been sent to representatives to that effect. UNICEF also continued to be involved in the follow-up activities for summits and conferences. The follow-up to the World Summit for Children had been strategically linked with that of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development. Furthermore, UNICEF continued to work closely with the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the World Bank.

22. With reference to the triennial policy review of operational activities for development, she said that the effectiveness of UNICEF was in no small measure due to the decentralization of its activities, which were all undertaken in the context of a multi-year country programme; recipient Governments had the responsibility to implement those programmes. The funding system for development programmes should be improved in order to ensure the predictability of resource flows, timeliness of payment, the broadest possible base of support and a focus on core resources. With regard to the coordination of activities, UNICEF would try to develop its collaboration with United Nations system partners, particularly the World Food Programme, UNHCR and the World Bank, and with partners in civil society at the local and global levels. The triennial policy review recommendations would have an effect well beyond the limits of the United Nations system. The system could play an important catalytic role in the overall allocation of ODA resources and national public expenditure. It was

essential to translate the objectives and strategies of major international conferences into national programmes of action which would take country specificity into account. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Children must form part of the integrated implementation of the action plans that had come out of the international conferences of the 1990s. A proper system for the evaluation of results and monitoring of projects should be instituted.

23. UNICEF intended to become a centre of excellence and to provide itself with the skills, structures and procedures which would enable it to strengthen its capacity in order to ensure the survival, protection and development of children towards the year 2000 and beyond.

24. Mrs. REBONG (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said she wished to emphasize the central role of the recipient countries - the developing countries - in the management of their own development process. The success of activities could be measured above all by their impact on the socio-economic growth of those countries. It was therefore essential that the programming of operational activities should be based on the national development plans and priorities of the recipient countries. The recipient Government should have the paramount role in the planning, coordination, monitoring and review of development assistance activities.

25. In that context, it was essential for developing countries to receive assistance for the enhancement of national capacity in priority areas, and in particular programme planning and execution. National execution would be facilitated if the rules and procedures governing programme management and reporting requirements were simplified. The United Nations system should use national expertise and indigenous technology to the fullest extent possible. Since that mandate was part of General Assembly resolution 47/199, the Group of 77 and China had expected that the Secretary-General's report (A/50/202) would have included information in that regard.

26. It was disturbing to see that the level of resources allocated to operational activities continued to decline while demand for assistance grew. It was disappointing that the restructuring and rationalization of the management and functioning of United Nations programmes and funds had not been matched by a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development, as called for in General Assembly resolution 48/162. Donor countries should take urgent steps to increase levels of official development assistance. Despite their limited resources, developing countries continued to meet their responsibilities and make voluntary contributions. They joined the donor community in supporting all efforts to improve the effectiveness of operational activities, including the restructuring of the governing bodies of the funds and programmes, the use of country strategy notes, the programme approach and other relevant reforms.

27. Mr. LACLAUSTRA (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the triennial review of operational activities should seek to improve decision-making and set time-frames for their implementation. The European Union overall welcomed the recommendations of the Secretary-General and was pleased with the

progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199. However, there was scope for further improvement on a number of issues.

28. There was a greater need than ever for coordination between the various United Nations bodies; each one should focus on the areas for which it was best suited. At the headquarters level, the funds and programmes should create a system based on mutual support and complementarity, with a clear division of labour. At the field level, the European Union would support concrete measures to enhance coordination of operational activities at all stages, from design to evaluation. The resident coordinator system should be further strengthened, with United Nations development agencies offering their support as local circumstances permitted. Headquarters should offer clear and practical guidance for their representatives in the field on the importance of close cooperation with resident coordinators. More should be done to widen the pool of candidates for resident coordinator positions, to provide training for candidates for such positions and to assess their performance in respect of coordination achievements.

29. Coordination should be improved at all stages of planning, particularly before activities received approval. The recommendation concerning the organization of a single review committee deserved closer study, to clarify how such a body would work, given the provisions of resolution 47/199 regarding the creation of a field-level coordination committee.

30. It was encouraging that a large number of countries had already adopted the country strategy note system, which was becoming a valuable instrument for ensuring that the United Nations responded more effectively to the plans and development priorities of the recipient countries. Although the circumstances in each country were different, common guidelines should be drawn up on the elaboration of country strategy notes, with a view to involving all development agents, including civil society, and encouraging the sharing of experiences. In that regard, the Secretary-General's recommendation calling for the greater involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions was a welcome development.

31. As far as possible, United Nations agencies should have common premises and common services; they should also adopt common recruitment and staff training procedures.

32. Capacity-building should be directed towards promoting national execution and evaluation and enhancing coordination and policy development. While recognizing the work already being done in that regard, the issue should be kept under review to ensure that decisions taken at headquarters were actually implemented in the field.

33. With regard to national execution, while reporting procedures should be simplified, special attention should be given to accountability issues. United Nations agencies which had not yet done so, should take the necessary steps to adjust to the new approach.

34. Insufficient attention had been given to the process of monitoring operational activities and evaluating their effects. Monitoring should facilitate the timely identification of potential problems and encourage

remedial action as appropriate. The evaluation process was becoming increasingly important as the programme approach gained wider currency. Evaluation should become an integral part of all programmes and projects and would gain considerably from greater participation by all development bodies and partners.

15. Regional and multinational cooperation were extremely important, and an effort should be made to ensure greater coherence in regional programmes which involved United Nations agencies. However, the proposal concerning regional strategy notes was premature.

16. The Secretary-General's recommendations failed to mention a number of aspects of operational activities which merited closer study, particularly decentralization, the production of mission statements for various funds and programmes, the development of instruments to strengthen complementarity and coordination in the field, and the transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery.

17. The European Union was convinced that all countries, recipients and donors alike, stood to gain from greater efficiency in operational activities. Members of the European Union would soon be presenting a document outlining their views on that question, in the hope that a resolution on the matter would be adopted by consensus.

18. Miss VOLKOFF (Canada), also speaking on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand delegations, said that the Secretary-General's report on the triennial review of operational activities had gone a long way towards meeting the key concerns of the Halifax Summit, and that a number of its recommendations should be supported unreservedly. There was, however, a need to consolidate the progress that had been made and to move forward on a number of other fronts.

19. Coherence in operational activities was vitally important and should go beyond simple coordination. Operational activities should not be seen as an end in themselves but as part of a larger, overall strategy. Greater efforts should be made to widen the circle of institutional collaboration, and part of the responsibility for promoting such harmonization rested with Member States: they must deliver consistent messages to all parts of the United Nations system. In dealing with the elaboration of country strategy notes and the World Bank's economic policy framework paper, host countries could benefit from greater consultation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, with the United Nations playing a particularly important role in strengthening the social dimension of economic dialogue. A common database for analysis, policy and programming decisions at the national level should be put in place.

20. Coordination of operations in the field should go hand in hand with coordination between services at headquarters. It should be possible to enrich the work of thematic groups in the field in the light of conclusions reached by inter-agency task forces working on similar subjects. There should also be closer interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).

41. Ways should be found to achieve greater coherence between humanitarian and emergency operations and long-term development activities. There was no easy transition from one type of intervention to another and hence it might prove useful to undertake pilot studies in a number of countries. The coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) should be reviewed, in line with the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. Given that the specific needs of countries were rarely the same, it was necessary to find ways of meeting those needs appropriately, on the basis of a set of fundamental principles.

42. The coherence of the programmes administered by the United Nations agencies would be greatly enhanced by further harmonization of rules and procedures. Programming cycles had already been harmonized and common definitions of national execution and of the programme approach adopted. Now, the efforts towards reviewing simultaneously the programmes undertaken by different agencies in a particular country must be continued. With regard to programme budgets, the different budget elements must be defined consistently. As for administrative budgets, the possibility of achieving greater sharing of administrative costs and services in the field must be considered. It would be useful, in that respect, to identify several countries where an integrated administrative service could be tested. Her delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that a time-bound programme for harmonization should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1996. The members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) must be urged to take seriously the work of the sub-groups examining those issues and to give them their full support.

43. She agreed with the Secretary-General's proposal that an evaluation of the impact of selected major components of operational activities should be part of the next triennial policy review. In that regard, the delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand strongly supported the idea of joint evaluations by different organizations based on given themes. The capacity to conduct evaluations must also be strengthened at the national level. In addition, there must be regular monitoring of operations to ensure that programme implementation was progressing according to plan and that the lessons learned were constantly fed back into overall programming. Consideration must be given to the role which might be played by country strategy notes in identifying the targets for monitoring.

44. Any improvements to the system must begin with its human resources. In appointing resident coordinators and senior representatives of the various programmes, there must be rigorous adherence to the established selection criteria. The mix of expertise required to meet the needs of host countries must be determined in consultation with those countries.

45. The Secretary-General's proposal to draw up regional strategy notes required further debate. While it was important to integrate a regional dimension into the thinking of country teams, it might appear premature to discuss the introduction of a new instrument, given that the country strategy notes were still being tested. Moreover, given the growing importance of regional factors in national development policies, a review of the role of the

regional commissions could perhaps be undertaken to assess their contribution to the achievement of national development objectives.

46. Mr. BJØRN LIAN (Norway) said that half the Norwegian Embassies consulted during the preparations for the triennial review had reported that the operational activities of the United Nations system were characterized by rivalry between the various organizations, overlapping and fragmentation and were perceived as less effective and having less impact than those of the World Bank. The challenge was, therefore, to improve the efficiency of the United Nations development bodies by creating a unified system with a coherent strategy and programme.

47. First, the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly must not only be clearer, but also more binding for both the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies. Second, firm timetables must be established: three years should be the maximum time allowed for the global follow-up to recommendations, for urgent action should be taken in order to remove any obstacles that were identified. Finally, it was necessary to focus more on the mechanisms for implementation and to determine very precisely who should do what and when.

48. Many instruments aimed at strengthening operational activities had already been developed but were not being implemented. The slow progress in drafting a common manual, for example, was a cause for concern. Priority should be given to the definition of common guidelines on the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, as well as the presentation of budgets and accounts. In addition, the various bodies must have a common understanding of the programme approach and national execution and common guidelines should be established concerning the use of project personnel in national execution and the recruitment of government personnel to United Nations projects. Finally, rapid progress must be made in the areas of common services and common premises.

49. Other instruments needed to be developed. With regard to coordination, he supported the proposal to create a single review committee so that programmes could be reviewed by the various organizations before they were submitted for approval. Such a body would enhance the resident coordinator system. Both the country teams and the headquarters of each organization should support the resident coordinator system, in particular, by providing human and financial resources. The authority of resident coordinators must be strengthened and clarified and they must be allocated the resources needed to carry out their missions. They must review the relevance, complementarity and the degree of cooperation within the United Nations system and have the formal authority to approve all sectoral programmes and projects where approval authority had been decentralized to the field level as well as new country programmes which they would submit to headquarters.

50. His delegation welcomed the fact that a large number of countries were now formulating country strategy notes which also contributed to the strengthening of the resident coordinator system. That tool should be developed further and should specify, for instance, the division of roles between the various United Nations agencies and their complementarity.

51. His delegation had some reservations, however, regarding the new proposal to establish regional strategy notes and questioned their practical use. It did, nevertheless, support the recommendation to accord greater importance to the regional dimension in the formulation and implementation of development programmes, although measures to promote regional cooperation could be successful only if they were anchored at the national level.

52. Norway would continue its support for operational activities for development, while ensuring that they were effective and produced the anticipated results. There must, however, be more equitable burden-sharing among donors. The international community must secure a sound and stable resource base for development activities, preferably at a higher level than that set currently.

53. Mr. RAMOUL (Algeria) said that the triennial review of operational activities for development provided an opportunity to take stock of the achievements and failures of the United Nations in the field of socio-economic development and to make the necessary adjustments in the light of recent conferences and bearing in mind the new needs of developing countries. Despite the extensive reform process launched at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly in the economic and social sectors, lack of financial resources had prevented the Organization from fully implementing the development strategies adopted by the General Assembly.

54. The financial crisis, often explained by a decrease in ODA, also stemmed from the way in which some major donors perceived the role of the United Nations in the field of international socio-economic cooperation and from countries' lack of political will. For example, UNDP, long considered the central agency for funding cooperation for development, had a smaller and smaller budget to work with. It was paradoxical to ask an organization to be effective without giving it the means to function, and it was therefore essential to set up a stable, predictable and continuous financing mechanism for operational activities. The various options put forward in the Secretary-General's reports on new funding modalities offered a workable framework for a practical solution; although all possibilities for a reliable financing system should continue to be explored, an agreement on the implementation of multi-year negotiated pledges would constitute a first major step in that direction.

55. The developing countries had continuously given proof of their commitment to the efforts of the United Nations system in favour of development and had continued to contribute to that system. If the industrialized countries allocated the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA, it would be possible to finance the current operational activities of the United Nations system. They must therefore be encouraged to strive to reach that objective as soon as possible.

56. The innovative approach taken in the Secretary-General's report on the issue (A/50/202) should be stressed; placing the problems and the proposals for recommendations side by side would facilitate the task of delegations and should be a model for the future. While providing an exhaustive analysis of the role of the Economic and Social Council in the area of operational activities, the report remained silent on the role attributed to the General Assembly. It would

have been interesting to know the extent to which the division of labour and roles had been respected; it was also unfortunate that the report made the country strategy notes unavoidable tools for the orientation of the assistance provided, in spite of their voluntary character. The report should also indicate on what basis and according to what criteria countries might benefit from assistance provided in the framework of operational activities, instead of amalgamating the notions of developing countries and recipient countries. A frank debate should be launched on the criteria for eligibility because assistance, particularly to the countries in transition, should not be provided to the detriment of the developing countries.

57. Finally, the functioning of the resident coordinator system must be reviewed, because its implementation was creating practical difficulties. It would be preferable for the role currently played by one person appointed by the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the UNDP Administrator to be carried out in a collective manner, with chairmanship rotating among the various funds and programmes. The implementation of such a proposal could be the subject of consultations during the current session, in close cooperation with the secretariats of the various organizations concerned.

58. Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community which were Members of the United Nations, said that the triennial policy review of operational development activities should be assessed by the reflection on the work of the United Nations in its 50 years of existence and the new vision for the twenty-first century, the main objective being to do more to support the development of the developing countries.

59. In the Caribbean region, after years of structural adjustment, sustained growth remained an elusive goal for many countries. The investment expected following structural reforms had not materialized in all countries, and the social disruption they had caused had not always been remedied. The situation had been worsened by the hurricanes which had caused great damage in many islands. In meeting those challenges, the Caribbean Community would continue to cooperate with other members of the international community through the United Nations system. The fundamental principles enshrined in Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199 should continue to provide the basis for operational development activities. Programming at the national level should be based on national plans and priorities, and the selection of priority areas should remain the prerogative of the beneficiary Governments, which also had to take into account other sources of bilateral or multilateral assistance.

60. The basic purpose of technical cooperation should remain the promotion of self-reliance in the developing countries in the quest for sustainable development. To that end, their productive, administrative, technical and research capabilities should be strengthened. Increased procurement from those countries should also contribute to attaining that objective. Reinforcing their capacity would put them in a position to implement the decisions taken at the major United Nations conferences.

61. Improved coordination of the activities of the United Nations system should have a significant impact on programme activities. At the headquarters level, the Administrative Committee on Coordination constituted an effective system,

but at the field level the resident coordinator system was hampered by important institutional restrictions. The representatives of the organizations must play a major role in promoting coordination in the field. They must commit themselves fully to participating in the implementation of activities under the direction of the resident coordinator. Recommendations 8, 9 and 10 of the Secretary-General's report must be carefully examined in order to make the resident coordinator system more responsive to the needs of countries.

62. The members of the Caribbean Community were also of the view that the process of formulation of the country strategy notes had a positive impact on coordination at the field level. The United Nations system viewed the notes as an essential tool for harmonizing national priorities with the United Nations system's comparative advantage.

63. Finally, it should be noted that while demands for operational activities were growing, resources were stagnating or decreasing, and remained unpredictable. That was a worrisome trend given the role of the United Nations in facilitating cooperation for development, and it must be reversed by setting up a new and more efficient financing system.

64. Mr. CHULKOV (Russian Federation) drew attention to the positive changes in operational development activities over the preceding years, especially a widening of their functional frameworks, the emergence of new tendencies concerning the promotion of sustainable human development in particular, the transition from assistance for specific projects to assistance for long-term development activities, reform of the public sector and protection of human rights.

65. Commendably, United Nations programmes and funds, while continuing to give priority to the needs of the poorest countries, were endeavouring to address the needs of other groups of countries, in particular the specific needs of the countries in transition. He noted with satisfaction the revitalization of the activities of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as in the Baltic countries. His delegation was especially pleased that the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA had decided to reinforce the financial bases of their activities in the countries of the region and that the Executive Board of UNICEF would shortly introduce a regional strategy for its activities in those countries.

66. Given the financial difficulties faced by United Nations programmes and funds, special attention must be paid to reforming the system of operational activities. To that end, a more flexible financing mechanism should be set up, more should be done to strengthen the reporting obligation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects while at the same time their activities should be made more transparent. His delegation endorsed recommendations 4, 17, 23 and 28 of the Secretary-General's report (A/50/202) concerning those issues.

67. The problem of enhancing the effectiveness of operational activities was closely linked to questions concerning the programme approach, national execution and national capacity-building, as was apparent from recommendations 21 and 22 in the report. Steps should be taken to encourage a shift in focus of

operational activities away from the traditional provision of technical assistance to specific projects towards the implementation of cooperation programmes in which United Nations system support would be mobilized around national strategies and goals. Guidelines for the implementation of the programme approach and national execution should also be drawn up.

68. Sharing the experience which certain countries and regions already had in that innovative area would also help to enhance the effectiveness of operational activities. An example of that would be the fruitful cooperation between western Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America which had made it possible to carry out an interregional project involving the exchange of their experiences of using facilities offered by UNDP. That kind of activity should be further developed, especially within the framework of the action taken by UNDP on technical cooperation between developing countries.

69. He noted with satisfaction the trend towards strengthened cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, most notably with regard to social development, the fight against poverty and environmental protection. The Russian delegation therefore supported recommendations 24, 25 and 26 of the Secretary-General's report. A more active participation on the part of the system in the execution of projects financed by the international financial institutions could indeed improve the prospects for operational activities. It was to be hoped that the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on operational activities in 1996, which would consider strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions in the area of development, would give a new impetus to that cooperation.

70. The strengthening of inter-agency cooperation and the coordination of activities between headquarters and the field would play an essential role in that context. The coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in operational activities should be strengthened, as should that of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions. The efforts of other coordination mechanisms to implement programmes of action for the countries of Africa and the least developed countries and to combat AIDS also deserved full support.

71. Progress in inter-agency coordination at country level had been slower. Accordingly, the resident coordinator system should be strengthened, by more clearly defining the functions of resident coordinators, better financing their activities and improving interaction between Headquarters and the field. Recommendations 8 and 9 of the Secretary-General's report contained useful proposals in that respect.

72. Given that UNDP played one of the foremost roles in operational activities and the resident coordinator system, it would be a good idea to strengthen its presence in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and to establish offices in countries where it was not represented.

73. Mr. WANG Xuexian (China) said that while the international situation had changed considerably in recent years, those who had hoped that the peace dividends from the end of the cold war would help poor nations to accelerate

their economic and social development had been disappointed. The gap between the North and the South continued to widen and, what was more disappointing, official development assistance, far from being increased, was actually being reduced. Against that background, consideration of operational activities for development was of great importance for the future development of the developing countries and for the formulation of immediate objectives.

74. While it was true that the United Nations development system had, over the years, provided useful technical assistance to the developing countries, allowing them to accelerate their social and economic development, it should devote even more attention to operational activities for development.

75. The formulation of a country's development strategy and programmes and the selection of priority areas for cooperation with the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations were matters that came within the scope of the country's sovereignty. In formulating programmes of assistance, those bodies should take into full consideration the stage of development and particular circumstances of the recipient countries, respect the wishes of their Governments and be flexible in taking measures to meet their practical needs, so that the assistance provided would play a positive role in their development efforts.

76. Coordination of operational activities for development at country level was the responsibility of the recipient country; the body designated by the Government should be responsible for the coordination of external assistance. The resident coordinator should respect the relevant institutional arrangements made by the recipient Government and should, at its request, help the country to improve its coordination ability, rather than try to replace it. The resident coordinator could play an important role in enhancing cooperation with the field representatives of the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations development system and in ensuring rational coordination of their activities, so as to enable them to make full use of their comparative advantage in assistance activities at the country level. At Headquarters, the relevant organs and organizations should share the tasks among them in such a way as to avoid duplication of work and improve their efficiency.

77. Lack of financial resources had long been a major problem, which hampered the implementation of operational activities for development. The resources mobilized had fallen far short of the targets which had been set, and that had led to reductions in many assistance programmes and had affected the implementation of assistance activities. Many recipient countries had therefore adopted the system of cost-sharing. Lack of resources was a matter of concern which would have to be remedied if the momentum of operational activities for development was to be maintained.

78. In order to achieve a more predictable, sustainable and stable increase in resources for operational activities, the developed countries should demonstrate clearly their political will on the issue of funding, increase their contributions to the relevant organs and organizations of the system and undertake greater responsibility in terms of resources for the implementation of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
27th meeting
held on
Thursday, 9 November 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

later: Mr. MURPHY (Vice-Chairman) (Ireland)

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AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) TRIENNIAL POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/113 and Add.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/345, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518)

(a) TRIENNIAL POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/50/202-E/1995/76 and Add.1-3)

1. Ms. HEYZER (Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Governments of more than 100 countries, most United Nations organizations and the non-governmental organizations present had adopted a strong Platform for Action, and that the time had come to translate the commitments made at the Conference into action, by allowing women to participate in the decisions that affected their lives, and bring about a world of equality, peace and well-being for all.

2. In the wake of the Conference, the key concerns of UNIFEM were the political and economic empowerment of women; women must have access to and control over economic resources on a long-term sustainable basis, and they must have control over their own lives and become decision makers at all levels.

3. During the 20 years of its existence, UNIFEM had achieved many successes in the areas women had identified as priorities and, in keeping with its mandate, it continued to work both in the developing countries and within the United Nations system. It was building partnerships with other United Nations agencies to bring about sustainable and gender-equitable development. UNIFEM pursued those aims through its participation in various inter-agency working groups and its association with non-governmental organizations and women's groups.

4. At the current time, UNIFEM regional advisers were providing technical support to United Nations resident coordinators to facilitate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the national level. UNIFEM was also working closely with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at the country level, and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to build links between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That action was reinforced at the local level by action taken in various regional bodies.

5. UNIFEM was a small organization, which meant it could respond quickly when new problems arose, and yet it had a strong constituency throughout the developing world. It had been assigned a leading role in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and was ready to meet that challenge. In order to honour the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNIFEM urgently needed to double its resources, which currently stood at $12 million. It wished to thank all Member States for their generous support at the recent pledging conference, and called on the international community to show the political will needed to allocate the necessary resources to that important aspect of human and social development.

6. Ms. ULLOA (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of States members of the Rio Group, said that the Rio Group and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean had set out their priorities for development in the Montevideo Declaration signed on 19 May 1995.

7. Each actor in the development process had a clearly defined role to play. The donor countries should reach the agreed targets for official development assistance and should provide resources for operational activities for development on a predictable continuous and assured basis. The United Nations system should safeguard the universal, neutral and multilateral nature of operational activities, which should meet the needs of the developing countries and respect their policies and priorities. The developing countries, for their part, should take charge of their own development.

8. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean agreed with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that the latter should concentrate its resources in four areas of sustainable human development: elimination of poverty, the environment, the status of women and job creation. While subscribing to the programme approach, the same countries believed that greater flexibility was desirable to allow the particular conditions of different countries to be taken into account, and that the project approach was preferable in some specialized sectors.

9. For those reasons, a triennial review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system was essential, as only with a periodic review was it possible to correct mistakes and improve the effectiveness of the system. For the same reasons, the decentralization of all funds, programmes and specialized agencies - consequent strengthening of field offices - would encourage dialogue and pragmatic solutions and was a welcome development, as were efforts to simplify and harmonize procedures.

10. In the Montevideo Declaration the signatories expressed their concern that the resources allocated to them by UNDP had been noticeably reduced, their region being considered to have reached a certain level of development. In fact, their development efforts were in a sense being held back by the uncertainties of the world economic situation.

11. With regard to economic and technical cooperation between developing countries, the Montevideo Declaration reaffirmed that, like all operational activities of the United Nations, it should correspond strictly to the national priorities defined by the countries themselves.

12. Mr. DUBČEK (Slovakia) said that since the United Nations had a broad mandate but only limited resources, it should seek to strike a balance between activities devoted to peace-keeping and international security and those devoted to social and economic development. It should incorporate a practical approach to dealing with everyday problems in its policies and strategies for development funds and programmes.

13. According to documentation on United Nations operational activities for development (A/50/202/Add.2, in 1993 and 1994 operational activities were carried out in only one of the two successor States of the former

Czechoslovakia, even though both those States had been admitted as Members of the United Nations on the same day. One could ask whether the United Nations system preferred to take the easier path by relying on traditional connections. And yet Slovakia had had to build its entire State administration by itself. Fortunately Slovakia had been among the new countries of Central and Eastern Europe which had benefitted from bilateral support from some donor countries.

14. Donor countries should have more opportunity to see what was being done with their contributions to United Nations development funds and programmes. Some way should be found to increase the representation of newly admitted Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, although the hiring freeze made that difficult to do. One way to address the problem would be to offer young people from those countries internships in various parts of the United Nations. With regard to actions taken by the executive boards of United Nations development funds and programmes (A/50/202/Add.1), Slovakia supported the recommendation of the Economic Commission for Europe that the Commission should act as a focal point to promote cooperation between United Nations programmes and organs dealing with the integration of transition countries into the global economy.

15. UNDP should play a central role in sustainable human development. The decision by the Executive Board to strengthen the Regional Directorate for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States had been a positive step forward. Since the Secretary-General had entrusted the Administrator with responsibility for assisting him in improving coordination of operational activities for development, a number of positive outcomes had been obtained, including an agreement with the Director of the Department of Public Information, aimed at strengthening the role of resident coordinators.

16. Mr. AL MANIA (Qatar) said that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations offered an excellent opportunity to review the scope of operational activities for development, particularly since development was the Organization's main objective. Moreover, the resources being allocated to operational activities were not assured and were declining, at a time of change when operational activities were having to be constantly adapted to meet the countries' growing needs. While it was natural that the United Nations should be asked to help Governments deal with problems for which they had insufficient financial resources, the gap between the needs of Member States and the capacity of the United Nations system to accommodate them was growing.

17. The Organization should make clear exactly what resources were available. Official development assistance, after remaining constant for 20 years, had fallen from $60.8 billion in 1992 to $55.9 billion in 1993. That would have a negative impact on assistance in general, and on operational activities in particular, and was very worrying. Whereas the Executive Board, by its resolution 90/34, had envisaged an annual growth rate of 8 per cent in voluntary contributions for the five-year period 1992-1996, contributions to UNDP had remained constant in real terms; in the past year, there had been a sharp fall in contributions which had produced a deficit of $1.4 billion for the five-year period as a whole. Those financial problems were also affecting the work of UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Food Programme (WFP), which were often the executing agencies for UNDP and long-term planning had been hampered by the unpredictability of levels of contributions. It was therefore necessary, in the

context of the triennial review of operational activities for development, to devise a more predictable and reliable financing mechanism, drawing on the recommendation made in resolution 46/182, and to urge Governments to abide by their commitments.

20. Co-operation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations should be strengthened, particularly in the area of the environment and poverty alleviation, since that co-operation was important to developing countries and since the practical experience of the United Nations was of interest to the financial institutions.

21. Qatar's contributions to operational activities for development totalled $565,000, of which $175,000 had gone to UNDP and the rest had gone to the WFP, UNIFEM, and UNEP.

22. Mr. MARTINEZ BLANCO (Honduras), speaking on behalf of the countries of Central America, endorsed the statement made by the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The world had changed a great deal since the signing of the United Nations Charter, yet no mechanism had been put in place to promote effectively North-South and South-South dialogue.

23. Given the scale of need in developing countries, the United Nations should be given adequate resources for operational activities, including those relating to the fight against poverty, hunger and environmental degradation, development of human resources and job creation. Those were vital activities which should retain their universal, multilateral, neutral and flexible character, so that they could be adapted to the needs of receiving countries.

24. More emphasis should be given to economic and technical cooperation between developing countries, the potential of which was by no means negligible. The countries of Central America supported the idea of creating a trust fund and of organizing a conference on South-South cooperation. They had drawn up an integrated agenda for sustainable development in the subregion, based on dialogue, which deserved the support the United Nations system.

25. While General Assembly resolution 48/160 had paved the way for the reform of the Economic and Social Council and other bodies, it was none the less necessary to revitalize the organizations of the United Nations system dealing with development cooperation by reviewing their operations and enabling them to cooperate more closely with the World Bank and other Bretton Woods institutions. Only by carrying out a structural analysis of the world's development problems could solutions be found.

26. Mr. Soo Gil PARK (Republic of Korea) welcomed new trends in operational activities, such as the greater range of operational activities and the fact that they were being carried out in an increasing number of countries. Country strategy notes should integrate United Nations activities into national priorities and facilitate monitoring and evaluation. Although not all countries had adopted that system, a number viewed it as a valuable tool for coordinating external aid, and the majority of resident coordinators regarded it as useful. Countries should be assisted in drawing up strategy notes, if they so desired, but they should be left free to decide on matters of content.

25. The programme approach was working well, but should be implemented more flexibly.

26. It was encouraging to note that national execution had increased significantly, although, as suggested in recommendation 16 of the report under consideration, it should be on a situation-specific basis. National execution was an important instrument to strengthen national capacities.

27. In line with recommendation 8, the resident coordinator system should be strengthened in order to make better use of the limited available resources. Considerable work had already been done to that end, since the Administrator of UNDP had been entrusted with the overall responsibility of assisting the Secretary-General in improving the coordination of operational activities.

28. With respect to simplification and harmonization of procedures, a targeted programme should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1996, with a progress report in 1997.

29. Cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and other organizations of the United Nations system had been enhanced in the areas of social development, environment and combatting poverty, and the time had come to promote dialogue and harmonization among all bodies at the headquarters level.

30. In line with recommendation 23, periodic evaluations should be made of the impact of activities and the lessons learned should be systematically brought to the attention of those responsible for programming.

31. His delegation supported the principle of common premises, which offered numerous advantages, provided that it did not incur additional expenses. However, a willingness on the part of the United Nations system agencies to work together was more important than shared services and premises.

32. Finally, the Republic of Korea had increased its voluntary contributions by 65 per cent over the sum announced.

33. Mr. PAWAR (India) associated himself with the statement made by the Philippine delegation on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, but wished to make some additional remarks regarding the recommendations contained in the report submitted.

34. The country strategy note, which had been envisaged as a tool of convenience for the better coordination of the activities of the United Nations agencies in the field, and their better incorporation into the country's scheme of development activity, should remain optional and should not become the basis on which generalized policy guidelines were drawn up. India, like various other countries, India saw no need to use that mechanism, and emphasized that, pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolution, those notes could never be discussed by any of the Boards of United Nations bodies or by foreign Governments.

35. It would also appear that the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/50/202) were based more on responses from the field

representatives of the agencies on the ground than on replies from the sovereign Governments themselves. It would be interesting to know how many countries had indicated their views. Some of the 28 recommendations proposed were practical and could be considered, but most were intrusive. Formulation of guidelines applicable to the United Nations system as a whole on the basis of a narrow range of experience contradicted the spirit of United Nations development assistance.

36. The importance India attached to development activities was reflected in its generous contributions. However, the rules must be respected and such assistance must be universal and impartial.

37. Mr. ZENNA (Ethiopia) concurred with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and noted that many developing countries, especially the most deprived, were experiencing enormous problems relating to poverty and illiteracy, among other issues, which frequently threatened the very existence of their populations. He commended the important role played by the United Nations bodies in their efforts to improve the situation. He welcomed the decision of the Executive Board of the UNDP to put the eradication of poverty at the centre of its development activities and to increase the rate of total resources allocated to the least developed countries. He hoped that other United Nations bodies would do likewise.

38. Ethiopia supported an integrated approach at the national and regional levels, which directly benefited Ethiopia by providing supportive services to the Government's decentralization efforts. That approach had also been applied to the fifth country programme cycle.

39. He was gratified that national execution was increasingly becoming the norm for operational development activities of the United Nations system and that such projects and programmes, were receiving additional resources. Since few least developed countries executed their own programmes, much remained to be done, and capacity-building should continue to be an essential part of the operational activities of the United Nations system at the national level.

40. The process of ongoing decentralization and delegation of power currently occurring within United Nations development organizations was crucial. For reasons of cost-effectiveness, more national experts should also be involved. The United Nations should respond to the growing needs of developing countries, and the number of experts in the field should be increased.

41. The question of funding of activities was of central importance, but resources had stagnated or were declining. The most disadvantaged developing countries were the most seriously affected by the reduced United Nations programmes in particular, where net flows of official development assistance had decreased; those of sub-Saharan Africa received only an insignificant proportion of direct foreign investment devoted to developing countries and were suffering a continued decline in exports. A mechanism should therefore be established whereby continuous and predictable resources continuously available.

42. Mr. Murphy (Ireland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

43. Mr. OMAR (Bangladesh) endorsed the views expressed by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and of China and noted the steps taken to implement recommendations contained in General Assembly resolutions 44/211, 47/199 and 48/162. He welcomed the growing collaboration between United Nations bodies, particularly through the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) and the Consultative Committee on Programmes and Operational Activities (CCPOQ). It was more important than ever to adapt operational activities to the needs and priorities of individual countries, involving local officials at each stage of projects, and to build up national capacity by fully involving the institutions, expertise and services of the beneficiary country and furthering decentralization and delegation of authority.

44. In that connection, it was crucial that resident coordinators should continue to provide team leadership, that Governments should be able to retain direct access to the appropriate development bodies in accordance with their comparative advantages and that programmes should have sufficient flexibility to respond to the specific development objectives of each country. There was growing concern that the United Nations was according more importance to conflict resolution than to short-term humanitarian relief activities, when development constituted the only means of laying solid foundations for international peace and security. The resident coordinator might assume responsibility for humanitarian assistance as well as for other operational activities, but should not exercise any political function whatsoever, since that would undermine the principle of neutrality of the Coordinator's activities.

45. With respect to the critical resource position of United Nations funds and programmes, his delegation considered that it was not so much a financial question as one of lack of political will among the international community. Ironically, the lack of resources which was reflected in the decline in official development assistance came at a time when there was talk of revitalizing the United Nations system to respond better to the economic and social needs of the developing countries. In order to be effective, the operational activities required a continuous, predictable and assured flow of funds especially towards the least developed countries which were in a desperate economic situation.

46. The restructuring and strengthening of the Economic and Social Council had afforded an opportunity for more interaction between the Council and the executive boards of the Funds and Programmes, which should receive policy guidance from the Council in the interest of programme coordination and consistency.

47. The programme approach remained an important element in better integrating efforts made within the United Nations system with national priorities and in mobilizing resources for the purpose. However, it was not an end in itself and should be implemented with greater flexibility so as to take into account the diverse needs of each country.

48. His delegation considered that little progress had been made with respect to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 relating to harmonization and simplification of the rules, procedures and formats of the United Nations system.

49. Furthermore, whereas the concept of a regional strategy note was still somewhat premature, exchange of information and experience should be intensified through institutions such as the regional economic commissions. The country strategy notes should be prepared, if desired by the Government in question, under its sole responsibility and as a complementary tool for overall programming undertaken with or without the assistance of the United Nations agencies.

50. With respect to cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, which was currently being discussed by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development, the policy dialogue could be promoted within the framework of a strengthened Economic and Social Council, at the level of Headquarters, and with the resident coordinators at the country level. The Bretton Woods institutions could also lend their support to efforts undertaken within the United Nations system in capacity building, poverty eradication, and environmental conservation. Conversely, the United Nations system could make a contribution by giving a human face to the structural adjustment programmes designed by the Bretton Woods institutions.

51. On that basis, his delegation undertook to contribute actively to the important triennial policy review of operational activities.

52. Mr. BETI (Observer for Switzerland), noting that the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (A/50/202) were a sound basis for discussion of the directions and guidelines to be followed for operational activities over the following three years, said that five major issues required consideration.

53. First, international cooperation for development was going through a difficult phase because the traditional donor countries were facing serious budgetary problems while, at the same time the foreign aid needs of the countries of the South and a large number of countries in transition were continuing to increase. Priorities would therefore have to be reviewed and painful choices made in order to obtain the best possible results with the available resources, and each organization should focus on the areas in which it had genuine comparative advantages.

54. Where the efficiency of the operational activities of the United Nations was concerned, it should be noted that progress had been achieved in national execution and the programme approach, although much remained to be done with respect to the country strategy note and coordination. However important they might be, such aspects should not be treated as an end in themselves: the point was that they should achieve the desired impact. Switzerland was therefore prepared to give financial support for a study on the subject, which had not been dealt with in the report of the Secretariat.

55. The greatest comparative advantages were to be derived in the area of capacity-building - for both programme design and management - since given their neutrality and impartiality, the United Nations funds and programmes were in the best position to assist partner countries in assuming responsibility for their own destiny.

56. Regarding teams at field level on whom the system's reputation largely depended, the quality of resident coordinators could be improved through a rigorous selection process; inter-agency team work at the local level could lead to better results by eliminating counter-productive rivalries.

57. Lastly, the system of funding operational activities, inter alia through multi-bilateral funding, did not constitute a lasting solution in terms of preserving the neutrality, independence and impartiality of the United Nations. The ad hoc working group on funding modalities should therefore consider the possible options especially for stopping the erosion of general funding for funds and programmes.

58. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand), commending the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/202) as a useful reference for the Committee's deliberations, said that the triennial review should be aimed at strengthening the existing system of operational activities for development so as to allow it to respond better to the needs of the beneficiaries, particularly the developing countries. Indeed, an increasing number of countries were making demands on the United Nations organizations for support not only in traditional areas - food production, poverty alleviation, health and education - but also in other sectors such as strengthening of national capacities for research and development, environmental protection and sustainable development.

59. Concerted efforts were therefore required at all levels to achieve those development objectives and should take the form of closer collaboration between Governments, specialized agencies of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector; coordination of those efforts should be provided by the Economic and Social Council. In any event, it should be ensured that the recipient Government bore primary responsibility for its national development programme and the priorities established.

60. In view of the diverse scenarios in each country, the United Nations agencies should adjust to the local needs for sustainable development; in that connection, the resident coordinating system was important, and should be strengthened as the focal point for dialogue essential to ensure programme success.

61. With regard to planning tools, the country strategy note provided an excellent framework for United Nations development activities and should be expanded to regional cooperation, in implementation of recommendations 19 and 20 in the report of the Secretary-General. The programme approach, for its part, better accommodated the needs of the developing countries. National execution was a practical way to enhance national capacity and institution-building, even though various difficulties had arisen during the implementation process, in part because of the lack of clarity of some of the rules applied. His delegation also welcomed inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the joint consultative groups which provided an opportunity for the exchange of views between the various partners.

62. All those activities required financial support on an orderly, stable and predictable basis, and it was therefore critical that donor countries

demonstrate the political commitment to provide the funds promised and thereby to reach the objectives established during the triennial review.

63. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that since General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV) had declared UNDP to be the lead agency for operational activities for development, the other funds and programmes had become more financially independent and UNDP no longer could play that role. Nevertheless, it should remain responsible for the coordination of the entire system and its ability to do so should be strengthened.

64. Although resident coordinators had a key role to play, they should be assisted by ensuring that the local representatives of other entities engaged in operational activities consulted them regarding the implementation of major programmes and by authorizing the resident coordinators to propose to the heads of those entities the amendment of country programmes and major projects, where required, to bring them into line with the country strategy note, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199.

65. The country strategy note contributed to the effective implementation of United Nations operational activities and to the coordination of development projects at the local level. He therefore welcomed the decision of the World Bank to participate in the preparation of country strategy notes. His delegation also fully supported recommendation 25. It would also be possible to improve coordination between United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions by requesting United Nations agencies to formulate specific development plans which could be funded by the World Bank. For its part, his Government was prepared to promote coordination between its own bilateral projects and those of multilateral agencies. The report by the Secretary-General indicated that approximately two thirds of the developing countries had opted for the country strategy note process. However, so many countries remained indifferent or opposed to the process because they considered the benefits to be minimal compared with the substantial effort required to prepare the notes. That attitude placed the system in danger. Accordingly, it would be best not to limit the country strategy note process to the operational activities of the United Nations. Donor countries also should use the notes to coordinate bilateral assistance activities, with the result that the entire range of assistance would be implemented in a coordinated and effective manner. Should a consensus on the issue emerge, his Government was prepared to make the best use of country strategy notes in its development assistance activities.

66. The decision by recipient countries to promote national execution was a considerable achievement, but it should be borne in mind that they would be able to avail themselves of its benefits only if they had the administrative capacity to do so. It would be necessary to review how national execution was implemented in each country and to determine whether the desired objectives were attained and, if necessary, to make any required changes, pursuant to recommendations 16 and 21.

67. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that the financial crisis affecting the United Nations was all the more serious because the end of the cold war had generated high hopes that a better world was finally within mankind's grasp. Moreover, the geographic coverage of operational activities had been extended to the CIS

countries and their scope now also included administrative reform, the defence of human rights and elections, and financial resources therefore should have been increased accordingly. As the Secretary-General had stated in his report (A/50/202), for financing for operational activities, the gap between what was sought and what could be provided was large and widening. For example, official development assistance had declined sharply, representing only 0.29 per cent of GNP for the States members of the Development Assistance Committee. Core contributions to UNDP had remained stagnant in real terms and it had been necessary to reduce programme allocations for the fifth cycle by 30 per cent. That was accompanied by a clear shift by donor countries to favour projects in areas which were deemed to be consistent with their particular interests, which was a deplorable erosion of multilateralism. Lastly, the unpredictability of UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP resources made long-term planning more difficult. For all those reasons, it was essential to resume and complete the negotiations on the establishment of an improved financing system to ensure the availability of adequate funding for operational activities on a predictable basis.

68. Those economic difficulties notwithstanding, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/199 the United Nations system had made considerable progress towards making its structure more integrated and effective and in more clearly defining its activities and ensuring that they were more complementary. The country strategy note had received the support of the overwhelming majority of recipient countries. The harmonization of programming cycles was continuing, the programme approach was winning ground and national execution was the norm in operational activities for development. The resident coordinator system had been strengthened, United Nations agencies had continued to delegate authority to their field offices and the sharing of premises and offices was increasingly common.

69. However, serious problems remained to be overcome with respect to the simplification and harmonization of procedures. The complexity of United Nations procedures created extra work for the developing countries which impeded the implementation of national execution. Not all agencies favoured common premises and some were disinclined to take part in the coordination effort. In the absence of a clear definition of the programme approach, some countries had undertaken experiments which should be analysed, while others had simply reduced the number of small projects.

70. The task of preparing the country strategy note was long and complex and the resident coordinator and the priorities of UNDP exerted undue influence on the system.

71. The current triennial review of operational activities was being conducted during a financial crisis whose far-reaching causes must be eliminated. It was to be hoped that the industrialized countries would take the efforts of the developing countries into account and that they would increase their financial contribution. Indeed, the goals of social progress and sustainable human development should be pursued by all, individually and collectively, in accordance with the principle of the equitable sharing of responsibilities.

72. Mrs. POLLACK (United States of America) welcomed the progress made with respect to the country strategy note and the programme approach. Her delegation

also was pleased that the Bretton Woods institutions were endeavouring to collaborate more closely with the United Nations development system.

73. The report by the Secretary-General contained focused and useful recommendations, in particular with regard to evaluation, monitoring and review, capacity-building and the resident coordinator system.

74. Her delegation endorsed recommendation 23 and was pleased to note that the evaluation of selected components of operational activities would be a key element of the next triennial review. All agencies should participate actively in that evaluation. The development agencies of the United Nations could further integrate their evaluation activities, for example by ensuring a unified evaluation procedure, by acknowledging the importance of the evaluation process and by ensuring that lessons learned were incorporated in new programmes.

75. Capacity-building was essential if governments and their citizens were to take full responsibility for their development. National execution was a critical component in that regard, for without it no development activity would be sustainable. At the same time it should not be viewed as the ultimate goal of capacity-building efforts. The United Nations system had the privilege - although not necessarily yet the capability - of helping developing countries strengthen their capacity to design and analyse policies, formulate strategies and assess needs. Capacity should be built up at all levels of society, as stipulated in recommendation 22.

76. The resident coordinator system must be strengthened, but in conjunction with an improvement of dialogue at the country level. Much had been asked of the United Nations system as a result of the recent international conferences on population, social development and women. Expectations for unlimited resource transfers must come to an end, and specific priorities had to be established. The ability of Governments to articulate policies and programmes clearly was becoming increasingly critical to the success of the resident coordinator system. Moreover, as in any system, consistency at all levels was a necessary ingredient; hence the usefulness of recommendations 9 and 10.

77. General Assembly resolution 47/199 gave clear guidance regarding harmonization of procedures and shared premises and services. What was not clear, however, was that the agencies involved were committed to achieving practical results. It was the only way in which the system would be able to respond in a coherent and efficient manner to the development needs of a country.

78. Three points required clarification. First, the utility of a system of regional strategy notes (recommendation 20) had not yet been established, and it was not certain that the regional commissions could or should take on such a responsibility. Secondly, while national execution was essential for long-term sustainability, accountability had to be enhanced at the same time, and to do so, internationally accepted standards of accountability must be in place. Thirdly, while funding patterns for operational activities had changed over the past decade, the triennial policy review was not the proper framework for finding better ways of funding. Other contexts would be more appropriate.

79. Mrs. RADUCHOWSKA-BROCHWICZ (Poland) noted with satisfaction the contributions made by the Consultative Committee for Programme and Operational Questions to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199, particularly to the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, the promotion of national execution of projects, the adoption of a common interpretation of the programme approach and the formulation of guidelines on the system of country strategy notes. The same was true of the work of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy and its subsidiary organs.

80. Although much had already been done, the effectiveness of the development sector of the United Nations system needed improvement. Many recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General should be dealt with also in other contexts, particularly that of the restructuring and revitalization of the role of the Organization in the economic, social and related fields. There, the Economic and Social Council was primarily involved, and it should make some changes in its methods of work. More precise information, however, should be provided on how the recommendations would actually be put into effect, especially recommendation 3.

81. One of the most important issues was capacity-building, and Poland fully endorsed the recommendations in the report. The activities of the United Nations system should be better coordinated, through the resident coordinators, who should be given the needed tools to work effectively. The UNDP Executive Board had taken a welcome decision to use 1.7 per cent of the Programme's resources to support the resident coordinator functions. Her delegation would like more specific information on the single review committee (recommendation 10). The monitoring of development activities and the assessment of their impact should also be given attention.

82. Her delegation was not ready to support recommendation 20 concerning a regional strategy note, even though it believed that regional factors were taking on greater significance in national development policies. Flexibility in the choice of policies was the single most important factor in the effectiveness of the role played by the United Nations system. There was a need for a country strategy note, but it should be conceived so as to reflect the conditions and requirements of the various countries.

83. Her Government was very satisfied with making national execution the norm for the operational activities of United Nations agencies, since it had great potential for national capacity-building, whose benefits should be obvious to Governments. It would greatly facilitate cooperation, an input of funds and technology, and technical cooperation.

84. Mr. LAING (Belize) said that he shared the views expressed by the delegation of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community. Belize was in general agreement with the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/202) and particularly applauded the steady move towards enhanced coordination of the activities of the various agencies, and their increased efficiency. The progress made in applying various elements of resolution 47/199 was encouraging, especially as to the recruitment of resident coordinators and the decentralization of regional offices. The system of country strategy notes

certainly was promising but the agencies, and especially UNDP, would do well to expand their facilities for providing training in the preparation of the notes. His delegation likewise supported recommendation 15; the resident coordinator could act as a catalyst in the activities in question.

85. The subject of capacity-building was never dealt with in detail in the report. Yet there was an urgent need for it, in many countries, for various reasons.

86. Regional coordination was not covered in detail in the report. In the case of Belize, in the absence of a resident coordinator, the various agencies worked from four locations in the two subregions of which Belize was a member. More dialogue among the agencies concerned and more coordination were therefore necessary. The annex to the report of the Secretary-General contained a particularly interesting analysis of the role of the donor community, which could be of great assistance but could never be a substitute for policy-making by the local authorities. Mention should also be made of recommendation 1, concerning the role of the Economic and Social Council in ensuring consistency among activities, and recommendations 6 and 7 concerning resources. It was urgent for the General Assembly to deal with the problem of the financing of the Organization and its development activities.

87. Lastly, Belize noted with satisfaction that UNDP had hastened to point out, at the time its 1995 Human Development Report had been issued, that there had been problems with the compilation of data relating to Belize, and its doing so had countered the negative consequences of inaccurate data from outside sources.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.